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*Build a movement  
of working women!*



## "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST"

No. 4

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# The I-CL & Women's Liberation

## Introduction

The fight for women's liberation is inextricably linked to the fight for the liberation of humanity as a whole, which can only be brought about by a proletarian revolution. Only such a revolution can create the economic foundation necessary to lay the basis for women's emancipation.

Women's liberation will be brought about by freeing women from privatised housework and the burdens and restrictions of family life and the sexual division of labour. To achieve this we fight for the socialisation of housework: for the provision of free 24-hour nurseries, free public canteens and laundries, free public house-cleaning services, as well as for full social and political equality — equal pay, equal opportunities and education, free and safe contraception and abortion on demand and freedom of divorce.

The only methods adequate to fighting for these revolutionary measures are those of the class struggle.

The growth of the female working population [especially during and since the second world war], and with this the new independence, wider outlook, the

break from the stranglehold of the narrow, down-trodden existence of the working-class housewife and mother — this means the possibility of drawing working class women into struggle is greater than it has been before in history. Over the last eight years that potential has more and more become reality. Most recently the women workers at Trico, Orlakes, and Personna have shown their ability to fight.

We have to find a road to organising that potential into a powerful new proletarian women's movement. We have to win the best fighters from the existing women's movement to that perspective. While recognising the validity of organisational autonomy for a militant women's movement, we recognise also the need for an intransigent battle of ideas within the movement: for in fundamental political questions there can be no autonomy, no third way outside the class struggle or outside the choice between communism and bourgeois feminism.

We fight within the women's movement for our slogan for a mass working class based women's movement. The women's movement is in general hostile to communist ideas, but that is

no reason for us to abandon it to the political leadership of petty bourgeois feminism, nor to adapt ourselves to it as the IMG have done.

Today, revolutionaries have got to start from scratch with today's women's movement. With "Communism" a dirty word in the women's movement, we are still fighting for fundamentals, and we must begin with forging a revolutionary tendency through which to argue revolutionary politics in the women's movement.

ANN CAMPBELL. 15.1.77

The text printed here is that of the document adopted at the first conference of the I-CL, in September 1976, slightly edited for publication.

## 1. PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

A. Women's oppression coexists with and is rooted in class society. It is directly, in all class societies, part of the system of exploitation. It is in addition grafted on to the class stratification of society, superimposed on it, so as also to claw in women of the ruling classes. All women are oppressed (though in different ways, and to different degrees); working class women are doubly oppressed; working women are both doubly oppressed and in addition exploited as proletarians.

B. Because the vast majority of women are members — active or dependent members — of the oppressed and exploited classes, which in Britain means the industrial proletariat, by definition, their liberation is organically linked to the general liberation from exploitation of the working class. Women's oppression began with class soc-

iety: the beginning of the end of the class-society cycle in human history, the dictatorship of the proletariat, will also see the beginning of the end of the conditions of oppression. The working class finds no class lower than itself on whose back it can climb as exploiter; it can only own the means of production collectively. Its self-liberating rule will therefore inaugurate a new beginning.

Immediately, exploitation of women will cease together with that of men; immediately the double oppression of women by the individual household economy will become the object of a drive to eliminate it as society begins to reorganise itself **rationally**, most efficiently; immediately all repressive legislation will come up for review, and it is inconceivable that a working class that has accomplished the tremendous self-education in action of breaking with capitalism, and breaking capitalism, would retain reactionary laws on abortion, divorce, etc; there will be millions of women workers and revolutionaries to ensure that it does not.

The family, however, like the State, cannot simply be **abolished**: its roots can merely be cut and the material situation within which it exists drastically altered — so that it **withers**. This will take a certain period of time and not all backwardness and oppressiveness will simply vanish on the morrow of the working class revolution. But the revolution will **cut the roots** and start a conscious and vigorous drive against the material conditions that might perpetuate oppression:

Proletarian revolution is therefore the medium and the prerequisite for ending female exploitation and trying to end female oppression — that is, for full women's liberation.

C. In modern history movements for women's liberation have developed through the stage of rationalist criticism of legal and social inequality (Wollstonecraft, J S Mill etc), and demands for equal bourgeois legal rights for women, to the stage of communist criticism of class exploitation in capitalist society of men and women workers; recognition of the double oppression of women (legal and social, through the family-economy situation), often superimposed on their exploitation; and demands for positive discrimination in favour of working class women.

Large movements of working class women in history defined themselves against bourgeois feminists (including the anarchist variant: reactionary and utopian **reformism** via individual, personal liberation — 'life-style politics') and organised in association with a revolutionary labour movement in the early Second and Third Internationals. Bourgeois feminist movements were (except on the suffrage question) usually ephemeral and peripheral.

The great defeats of the revolutionary working class movement by social democracy, Stalinism, and fascism, translate themselves in the language of historians of the women's movement as "the great counter-revolution". The massive organisational decline and crushing setback caused (e.g. through re-glorification of the family by Stalinism and Nazism) to the movement for women's liberation, was no more an accidental by-product of their relationship to the crushed or demoralised workers' organisations than was that relationship in the first place.

Working class women are central not merely because they are the most oppressed (as good-willed non-comm-

unist women's liberationists see it). They are central because they are organically part of the only class capable of freeing humanity. The working-class women's movements were central because, though autonomously organised, they were part of a working class army fighting the roots of their oppression — capitalism society; the central and necessary guiding role within them was played by the women of the proletarian party. This gave the proletarian women's movements coherence, a rational purpose, clear targets to aim at. It also meant that when the general movement of which they were part went down, they went down too. According to the nature of things, the women's movement went down furthest; and it has taken longest to recover.

## **2. FOR A WORKING-CLASS-BASED WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

A. Women's liberation is inseparable from proletarian revolution. Therefore we aim for a fighting movement based on working class women, directed by revolutionary Marxist politics: a mass communist women's movement.

B. However, abstract talk of a mass communist women's movement now either imagines a mass growth of communism among women only, or else a mass communist movement of men and women. It proclaims 'communism' without being able to explain it concretely.

The slogan 'mass communist women's movement' is thus meaningless and disorienting, for it demands work on a scale unattainable for us now, and therefore de-focuses us from the work we can do.

We are at the stage, not of building a



mass communist women's movement, but of trying to build a communist women's movement caucus in the women's movement; here and now we are actually only at the stage of hammering out an I-CL communist women's fraction!

C. We need a transitional-demand link between our ultimate goal of a mass communist women's movement (which inescapably presupposes the simultaneous existence of a mass communist movement) and the women's movement here and now.

D. The slogan 'for a mass working-class based women's movement' is such a transitional demand. It corresponds to the overall task of communists, covering a whole period — but by focusing on the class character and leaving for separate concretisation the **political** content it avoids the empty ultimatism which is inescapably part of the slogan for a mass communist women's movement.

The focus on the **working class** women expressed in 'mass working-class-based women's movement', while being non-ultimatic politically, does however contain our essential concerns and implicitly our central idea that the liberation of women and the class struggle of the proletariat are organically linked and inseparable. **Agitation** for such a movement will be possible and will bear fruit with wide layers of women who, while not accepting our basic conception, do recognise that working class women are the most oppressed and will recognise that a real women's movement must reach the masses of women who happen to be also the most oppressed.

Beginning with the question of **orientation** we then pointedly argue for our conception of the necessary and org-

anic link between women's liberation and proletarian liberation in a non-ultimatic concrete way, against both feminists and the wide range of socialists and 'communists' with whom the I-CL has disagreements on either the women issue or on a range of other issues. With this **class-orientation** slogan which **implies** our politics we have the best situation for arguing propagandistically for a communist women's movement without counterposing ourselves in a sectarian way to the existing movement.

The approach is analogous to the 1930s Trotskyist agitation 'for a labour party' in the USA, and our own agitation 'for a rank and file movement'.

In every one of the single issue campaigns, beginning with the question of who are the most oppressed (e.g. which sections of women suffer most from repressive abortion legislation — working class women) we can insist on our idea of the organic and necessary communist and class-struggle perspective for women's liberation — while participating fully and constructively in the campaign as it is now.

E. This approach, however, contains for the I-CL real dangers of substituting crude sub-political or anti-political sociological categories for our politics. For it to be positive for the women's movement and for I-CL politics, we need a high propagandist profile for the I-CL. Within any working-class women's movement, the ideological struggle for our conceptions on the women's movement, and against the left groups for the general ideas which separate the I-CL from them, must be the central content of our work.

Without the organisation of the I-CL women's fraction into a

aggressive campaigning force within the women's movement, the approach will at best produce a vapid sociological emphasis, inseparable from the sentimental and (if counterposed to communism rather than used as a bridge to it) politically harmful concern for working class women as the most oppressed which is not uncommon even amongst our ideological enemies in the women's movement — the feminists, Power of Women Collective, etc.

### **3. WOMEN AND THE CRISIS NOW**

**A.** The present capitalist crisis has resulted in a series of attacks on the working class, such as unemployment and cutbacks in social expenditure, which have had specific and severe consequences for working class women.

**B.** Where the State is cutting back on or closing hospitals, old people's homes, nurseries, etc. and waiting lists are growing longer, the working class woman is further overburdened with the responsibility of looking after the old, the sick, the young and disabled. Women are pushed back more into the isolation of the home.

**C.** We have seen attempts to reassert the bonds of the family, legally and ideologically, through propaganda by anti-abortion organisations such as SPUC and Women for Life.

**D.** The strength of ideas concerned with the family, e.g. the idea that men are the breadwinners, has made women particularly susceptible to unemployment. Employers have used the idea that "a woman's place is in the home" to try to compel women to leave their jobs first, often putting women on the redundancy list first, and arguing that they must 'create jobs for men'.

Most workers have not yet fought against such ideas and the sacking of women first, but this does not mean that all women accept that this should happen.

However, since many women work part-time because of family responsibilities, they are often badly organised and therefore one of the weakest and most expendable sections of the workforce.

**E.** We have also witnessed an attack on one of the most fundamental democratic rights of women — the right to an abortion.

### **4. LEGISLATION**

**A.** We must be clear that legislation under capitalism cannot liberate women — only a workers' state, opening the way to a withering-away of the state and to communism, can provide the material basis of real liberation — but we recognise that certain definite advances in women's rights can be made under capitalism through use of legislation.

**B.** The Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Employment Protection Act have taken up whole areas of discriminatory practice against women. This is due partly to the fact that the Government has had to fall in line with the rest of the EEC as regards equal opportunities for women, but it is also due to the growing militancy of women in the past years and their increasing activity within the labour movement.

**C.** This legislation is an advance in terms of women's rights in law over whole areas. However, the methods of enforcement have proved to be not only full of loopholes but also possibly dangerous in terms of diverting wo-

men's militancy through industrial tribunals and in terms of sowing the illusion that legislation can abolish women's oppression altogether.

Just how flimsy the legislation is in reality can no better be shown than by the fate of the equal pay legislation. After giving employers 5 years in which to use every conceivable loophole to get round it, the latest round of incomes policy agreements between the TUC and the Labour Government makes no allowance for extra increases to make up equal pay. (The official TUC-Government explanation for this is that equal pay has already been achieved).

D. However, this legislation does present us with real possibilities in terms of mobilising and drawing women into struggle, primarily through the Working Women's Charter [WWC].

The Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act, for example, have raised women's consciousness and the level of their demands. The fact that working women know that they are now entitled to equal pay by law raises their expectations and demands, and encourages them to feel confident and strong to fight for equal pay.

We must encourage the use of the legislation as a weapon to be used against the employers, rather than let it be a weapon they use against us.

E. But it is vital that we are extremely careful about the precise manner in which we use such legislation, and avoid:

i) the danger of co-option of sections of the women's movement into the system of tribunals and commissions which this type of legislation establishes.

ii) the diversion of campaigns into discussions as to how women can best

use the tribunal system and how this type of legislation can be extended and improved, i.e. sowing the illusion that purely through the continual improvement of such legislation, women's oppression can be eradicated.

F. In the WWCC, while seeking to utilise the interest that the recent legislation has engendered, we must state clearly that women must not have any faith in the tribunal system, and we should be careful that the Charter (old or amended version) does not merely become a passive investigatory body, concerned merely with the legalistic loopholes within the Acts. We must intervene in the investigatory committees, meetings, and rallies of the WWCC to show how the legislation is unable to give women real equality, and to argue for a fighting women's movement to be built to meet the present onslaught on our living standards. Only as a last resort and as part of a much broader struggle would we want to take cases to tribunals, and then only as a means to further the aspirations and level of organisation of the rank and file. We should never sow illusions in the tribunal system or see it as the main tactic to be used, and we should stress this point within such campaigns as the WWCC.

G. We should fight for certain aspects of the Acts such as positive discrimination to be taken up by the WWCC as part of a fight in the trade unions to increase the activity and involvement of women in the trade union movement. Within any campaign we wish to further the conscious self-organisation and activity of women at the workplace. We fight to raise their consciousness as



to their own strength and as to the roots of their oppression.

## **5. WOMEN AT WORK, THE TRADE UNIONS, AND THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER**

A. We have seen increasing proletarianisation of women during and since the two World Wars, as women are drawn more and more into the labour force. In the last decade we have witnessed an increasing consciousness and militancy amongst women workers, as seen in the growing numbers of equal pay and other strikes by women workers. Such strikes have shown that women — often regarded by the union leadership as the most backward and difficult to organise — are capable of carrying out long and difficult struggles in the face of attack not only from the employers but also from the trade union bureaucracy.

Ideas such as 'women only work for pin money' and 'women's place is in the home' have come under severe attack in the face of the increasing proletarianisation of women and challenges by working women to their inferior position in society. Recently, women have become increasingly active within the trade union movement, joining trade unions at twice the rate of men workers.

B. However, unemployment is also rising much faster among women, underlining the necessity for demands for a woman's right to work and security for part-time workers.

The public sector unions, with a large proportion of women members, and those hit especially hard by the cuts, have generally been the most responsive to women's demands. The few work-

place/union WWC groups that exist are in this sector, and it is the sector most immediately open for the WWC to gain influence in unions and workplaces.

C. However, the lack of coordination and activity to take up a struggle for women's rights, such as in the demands of the WWC, at a rank and file level, has meant that motions passed at conferences of public sector and other unions have remained paper promises yet to be fulfilled.

There still hardly exist any women's caucuses in the trade unions — even in those which have been active around the WWC and NAC. In some unions women's committees exist. In most cases they have little power and see their main aim not as mobilising women at the rank and file level, but as acting as a pressure group on the trade union leaderships. We seek to make such committees and the women's TUC more democratic bodies and more accountable to their membership. We also support making the decisions of the women's TUC binding on the whole TUC, while arguing that what women trade unionists need is not a bureaucratically-strangled conference like the women's TUC, but a fighting working-class-based women's movement.

D. We of course fight for the leading bodies of the trade union movement to pass motions advancing the struggle for women's rights, and we demand they act on these motions. This should not become the major task of any campaign, however, or a precondition for a fight within the unions. We support the adoption of the Charter by these bodies as part of a much larger fight at all levels of the trade union movement and within the Labour Party.

For example, the adoption of the Charter by the major trade unions allows us freedom to spread the demands and ideas behind the Charter at rank and file level more easily and means that we can fight for those unions to give their support to certain initiatives the campaign carries out.

However, committing the leadership of the workers' movement on paper to women's rights without a base in the unions will succeed merely in providing those 'leaders' with a left face, and enable them to pose as fighters in the vanguard of the struggle for women's rights. Moreover, the general right-wing swing within the trade union movement could have disastrous effects on a campaign which relies on official resolutions rather than a real rank-and-file base, and could result in that campaign tailoring its demands so as not to lose the official support it has gained.

These points are particularly relevant to the WWCC, which has as yet failed to build a really solid base. At the last national WWC conference, the IMG and many others were hesitant about adopting amendments to the Charter for fear of the repercussions it would have vis-à-vis affiliations from major unions.

## **6. THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

**A.** In the past seven years we have seen the rebirth of a women's movement in Britain. This is taking place at a time when the majority of women are playing an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, and this is creating a new economic foundation for relations between the sexes. The collectivisation of women on a large scale becomes a source of deve-

lopment of women, and women begin to see the need to organise and to develop an understanding of their oppression as women.

The rebirth of the women's movement in Britain was sparked off by such struggles as the Ford women's in 1969, and ideologically inspired by women themselves influenced by the 1960s American radicalisation.

**B.** Although the women's movement has made a radical critique of and attack on the family — undermining one of the pillars of class society — and the women's movement has a confused idea of building an alternative society, with a revolutionary process bringing this about, this has not led to a class analysis of capitalist society and an orientation towards linking the women's movement with working class action.

The existing women's movement is a petty bourgeois women's movement, confused and amorphous, dominated by a tendency towards utopian, personal, life-style politics. The dominant ideology of the women's movement is feminism of various shades: holding an abstract perspective that the central question for women's liberation is freedom from dominance and subjugation by the male sex, making a suspended analysis that takes no adequate account of the connection between women's oppression and the economic basis of society. Feminists focus on the subjective experience of female oppression rather than the objective necessities of the struggle to end that oppression, inextricably linked as it is with the class struggle. And they see the women's struggle as separate or parallel to the class struggle — rather than as a major integral component of that struggle, in a general historic sense. For them the women's move-

ment is (to adapt Marx's description of the doctrinaire socialists) "a movement which renounces the hope of overturning the old world by using the huge combination of means provided by the latter, and seeks rather to achieve its salvation in a private manner, behind the back of society, within its own limited conditions of existence...."

C. The feminist focus on the individual subjective experience of oppression issues logically in individualist politics. One logical conclusion of this individualist trend is the 'Wages for Housework' demand, postulating emancipation for the individual woman within the individual household.

The downright reactionary nature of the 'Wages for Housework' campaign within the women's movement shows the potentially dangerous nature of feminist ideology. 'Wages for Housework' is a corporatist demand in that it calls on the state to pay us a wage. Rather than calling for the collectivisation and socialisation of housework, the 'Wages for Housework' campaign wants to institutionalise the isolated, degraded, backward and stupefying role of the housewife. The reactionary logic of their campaign was demonstrated when they supported and encouraged Carol Miller, who viciously attacked the Cowley strike.

D. The broadest mobilisations of the women's movement have been around single-issue campaigns, most notably the National Abortion Campaign [NAC].

We recognise the important mobilising function of such campaigns and do not **counterpose** a more complete programme to them in sectarian fashion. However, a single-issue campaign, dealing with an issue which of course is

not 'single' and cannot stand isolated, is inevitably limited. It is temporary and will eventually diminish into bourgeois legal reforms.

This does not mean we try to diffuse the aims of NAC or submerge it into the WWC; but in our work inside movements like NAC we explain their limitations, and we strive to win people over to a broader perspective of ongoing work against women's oppression. We advance the slogan of a mass working-class-based women's movement fighting on all fronts for women's emancipation.

E. In NAC, and also in the WWC, we can see a definite **reformist** current in the women's movement, focused on parliamentary politics rather than rank and file militancy. This current shares with apparently 'ultra-radical' feminists a scepticism about working-class revolutionary action and an orientation to sectional solutions inside capitalism.

F. The most advanced section of the women's movement is the WWCC.

The importance of the WWC is that it makes the connection between women's double oppression and exploitation in the home and at work. We argue for a mass working-class-based women's movement — starting off with the elementary facts, that working class women are the majority, and the most oppressed — and point to the WWCC as the most promising initiative in this direction.

We hold that the WWC cannot be a perfect document encompassing every desired ideal. It must be concerned with raising the most fundamental and crucial issues to be a fighting, mobilising document. For this reason, we reject any attempt to make the Charter

into a blueprint for a future society, unrelated and unconnected to the day-to-day struggles of women.

We fight inside the WWCC against reformist illusions in anti-discrimination legislation and in 'left' bureaucrats.

G. As revolutionaries and as women, we do not get our 'Marxism' from the 'left' and our 'feminism' from the women's movement, as some sections of the women's movement claim. Marxists take up the battle of all oppressed sections of society, and only a revolutionary party with a programme of Marxism offers the possibility of the real emancipation of women through the abolition of private property and the establishment of a workers' state which will lay the material basis for the emancipation of women, by freeing women once and for all from household drudgery.

At the same time, Marxism is not a recipe for women's emancipation, without the struggle of women, and a lead from women themselves, this possibility cannot be realised. We support the right of women to organise separately against their own oppression, recognising that the self-organisation and activity of oppressed sections of the population is necessary and vital to further their demands and to agitate within the class, as well as drawing those oppressed sections into struggle.

As Marxists we work sensitively inside the women's movement to win it over to communist ideas, to fight for the political leadership of the women's movement by proving the correctness of our ideas, and to fight relentlessly reactionary campaigns such as 'Wages for Housework'. We seek to relate to the increasing polarisation in the wo-

men's movement, between socialist and radical feminist 'solutions' to women's liberation, in this way.

We have to re-learn communist traditions. We have to learn the history and lessons of the early communist women's movements — in Russia, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, and in Germany under the leadership of Clara Zetkin. We have to learn that the struggle for the emancipation of women is inextricably bound up with the struggle for communism, that the victory and defeats and the former are tied to the victory and defeats of the latter.

## **7. THE NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN AND THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER**

A. One of the most important developments in the women's movement in the last two years has been the growth of the National Abortion Campaign, in response to the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill and other anti-abortion measures. In terms of drawing into women into struggle and propagandising within broad sections of the labour movement for "Abortion on Demand — A Woman's Right to Choose", it has had some success.

However, its strength has fluctuated depending on the severity of the legislative attacks made on abortion rights. We support campaigns around single issues but within these movements we seek to broaden their scope away from purely legislative reform and towards an understanding of what the realisation of these demands means under capitalism.

At the 1975 NAC Conference a motion urging delegates to support the demands of the WWC was rejected. This

was mostly because some delegates believed a strong movement could only be built around a 'pure' single-issue campaign, and to support the demands of the Charter would diffuse that campaign.

The I-CL believes that abortion on demand cannot even begin to become a reality without a much broader fight against all cuts in the health service, against private practice, and for the nationalisation of the drugs companies. The WWC should take a more vigorous attitude in making links between NAC and the WWC and argue against seeing the question of abortion just in terms of fighting for or against legislation.

**B.** The WWCC links every aspect of women's oppression — at work and in the home — and is the only campaign really likely to take up the demands and needs of working class women and to draw such women into struggle, attempting at the same time to take forward the consciousness of women in struggle. The WWCC has the **possibility** of relating to and drawing in working-class women in a serious manner, which the women's movement in general does not recognise as being an irreplaceable task.

But the Charter campaign has a very weak base, is badly coordinated nationally so that every group tends to do its own thing, and is politically inadequate. Many major cities lack local WWC groups, and those WWC groups which do exist often lead a flickering existence round various single-issue campaigns (as they must tend to do as long as organised geographically rather than in work-places and unions).

The WWC, as a list of demands, has no necessary revolutionary quality. Its

value in the development of a revolutionary women's movement depends on it being used as a springboard for revolutionary propaganda, agitation, and organisation.

Certainly, unless the WWCC can establish practical relations with militant reformist women workers (and to that end also with left reformist bureaucrats) it is fated to be an empty propaganda front for the I-CL and IMG. However, if to establish those relations the WWCC subordinates itself to reformist politics, then once again it empties its campaign of real content.

The IMG's opportunist attitude to those trade union bureaucrats prepared to support the WWC is the wrong answer to the weakness of the Charter. The IMG is now prepared even to drop amending the Charter for the sake of forging "unity in action" with these trade union bureaucrats. The IMG admit that the Charter as it stands is inadequate — but want to hide amendments behind their backs in the form of policy statements, just bringing them out when the right people are looking, or when unions are prepared "to go as far as the Charter campaign in the sorts of amendments proposed".

If the WWC is not to collapse totally into a reformist campaign tailing the trade unions, it must be amended at the 1977 Conference, to include demands that are crucial at the present time: a woman's right to work; sliding scale of wages; positive discrimination; protection for part-time workers. And even amended, the WWC must be seen, not as a 'thing in itself', but as a subordinate part of building a rank and file movement of working class women.

The slogan of a mass working-class-based women's movement can take the



Charter campaign forward. First and foremost, the WWCC must relate to specific struggles (Trico and other equal pay strikes; nursery campaigns; abortion campaigns...). In a more continuous way, it can agitate for broad women's caucuses/committees/conferences, using the general arguments for a mass working-class based women's movement, and simultaneously argue within such bodies for the specific demands of the Charter — perhaps winning them over to the WWC, perhaps establishing WWC fractions within them. On a more day-to-day level, the main orientation of the Charter should be shifted away from geographically-based Charter groups to forming groups of Charter supporters within the trade unions and Labour Parties, providing as they do a focus for activity and rooting the Charter campaign in the labour movement, instead of the existing often floundering and rootless Charter groups. The **really viable** Charter groups will be those groups built **in struggle**, out of the radicalisation of women.

None of this can provide the answer to all the Charter's ills. But it is vital to grasp the important propaganda tasks of, and within, the Charter, and the need to build at a rank and file level, in order not to sink into the cess-pool of reformist half-hearted measures.

## 8. THE LEFT, THE I-CL, AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

Within the Labour Party Young Socialists, the dominant so-called 'Militant' tendency are plain reactionary: they reject the self-organisation and activity of women, counterposing the banality that men and women must unite and fight — all of women's problems will be solved

with the coming of the socialist millennium.

On the revolutionary left, the I-CL stands alone with the IMG as taking a serious interest in the women's struggle.

IS's attitude is completely opportunist. At one time they dismiss independent women's action, counterposing trade union militancy as the complete answer, reducing the women's question to a mere question of particular economic exploitation, and condemning the WWC as a sectarian scheme; at another they proclaim themselves 'revolutionary feminists'! They carry out no consistent education in their ranks and periphery on the question; as a result, their comrades are not clear even on such an elementary issue as holding trade union meetings in work hours.

The WRP is plainly **reactionary** on the question. The WSL is scarcely better, reaching only the level of abstract proclamation of a mass communist women's movement in **counterposition** to actual struggles. The RCG's doctrinaire sectarianism finds its worst expression in their **opposition** to positive discrimination in favour of women.

The IMG, however, as we have already indicated on particular questions, express in their work in the women's movement the same centrist approach as marks their politics generally. They tend to diffuse the demands of women into a general programme to meet the capitalist attacks in the name of building a united campaign, and in doing so to negate the importance of building a fighting movement of women round their own demands. Without such a movement, based on clear political demands, such unity is an illusion and becomes just a piece of paper.

We can rely on no-one but the I-CL to fight for communist politics in the women's movement.

But in face of the problem of tying our propaganda tasks with our day-to-day work in the movement, our women's fraction has tended to fall into an abstract polarisation.

General declamations for a mass communist women's movement have come into conflict with comrades day-to-day involved in the ongoing campaigns. The campaign activists, too, subscribed to the general goal of the mass communist women's movement; but they couldn't see a use for the slogan 'mass communist women's movement' immediately, because no-one knew what it meant concretely now, or implied now, for proposals or actions, or what to do with it in the **real** work they were doing. (It is notable that the 'mass communist women's movement' slogan proved no use at all in our work round the WWCC conference).

The advocates of the mass communist women's movement, also involved, mostly, in the campaigns, had no clearer idea — other than to proclaim; no concretisation on the level even of explaining the historically necessary links between proletarian liberation and women's liberation.

It was the classic case of the 'maximum programme' (mass communist women's movement) and the 'minimum programme demands' (e.g. NAC). Worse: other than propaganda for **socialism**, what did 'for a mass communist women's movement' mean now! At least the Second International's maximum programme knew clearly enough what it wanted. 'Mass Communist Women's Movement' wasn't so much a maximum programme as a hollow cry

for one.

Worse on the other side, too — for what point can there be, **as I-CL work**, in involvement in single issue campaigns, unless those knit into a general framework of I-CL politics and I-CL's fundamental propagandist, cadre-training, and recruiting concerns? No wonder each side found the other irritating.

The slogan 'mass working-class-based women's movement' should allow us to do our ideological work in a non-ultimatic and not passive-propagandist way within the movement as it now exists, and in future single-issue campaigns. Thus the slogan should put an end to the sterile polarisation in the work of the I-CL women's fraction, by concretising our central class focus (working class women) and **spelling out** our central ideas (necessary link between women's liberation and proletarian revolution) concretely **within** the living movement.

In the forthcoming period the I-CL cannot by itself build a mass fighting women's movement. Of course we work to build the WWCC and other campaigns; but our primary job is to make propaganda wherever we can — inside existing campaigns, inside the trade unions, and inside the women's movement, as the first step to building such a movement.

A fighting women's movement will not automatically assume or lead women to a communist consciousness; only through the conscious intervention of revolutionaries can such a movement be influenced in a communist direction. The job of the I-CL must be to fight the battle of ideas without which an effective movement cannot be built, and as part of this to draw working class women into struggle.

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA

**By Stan Lomax.**

## **Part 1: The debate.**

**THE THIRTY YEARS** since the war have seen the development of a dynamic capitalism in whole series of third world countries from Brazil to Nigeria, against the expectations of Marxists. Deformed workers' states have also appeared, such as China, in which the model of the degenerated workers' state of Russia has been used as a model for transforming society by forces — in China, the peasantry led by a nucleus of declassé former communists — contrary to all the expectations of classical Marxism. The problem of analysis and interpretation which these events pose for Marxists is immense — and central to the task of ideologically regenerating a revolutionary communist International.

The real and potential role of the various social classes, and the question of which road of development Russia would take, was central to the preparation of the movement which led the first and, as yet, only direct conquest of power by the working class — of the Bolshevik Party, and of the Russian Marxist movement out of which it developed. Stan Lomax's study of the debate on the question amongst Russian Marxists and socialists, and of the actual development of Russian capitalism can help towards an understanding of the events of the last 30 years, for many of the questions raised by those events were discussed in rough outline in the debate over the development of capitalism in Russia.

As capitalism developed in Russia, in the 19th century, the intelligentsia moved more and more into opposition to the Asiatic, despotic backwardness of the political regime. But their drive to realise the democratic ideals they had learnt from Western capitalism took the form of an effort to by-pass a Western-capitalist stage of development for Russia.

The radical intelligentsia placed their hopes in the 'people'. "To the people!", cried Alexander Herzen in 1861, in his paper "Kolokol", published from London: "That is your place ... Prove... that out of you will come not clerks, but soldiers of the Russian people". With the working class still embryonic, the 'people' were, above all, the peasants. The intelligentsia hoped for a direct transition from the primitive egalitarianism of the Russian peasant commune to a socialist society.

In 1874, hundreds of radical students and intellectuals set out for the countryside to do revolutionary work among the peasants. They met with suspicion, distrust, often hostility. Disillusioned, they turned towards terrorism as a method of disorganising Tsarism and galvanising the peasants into action. By 1879, the revolutionary Populist organisation, Zemlya i Volya, had split: the majority, taking the name Narodnaya Volya, focused their efforts on assassinating the Tsar, while the minority [Chernyi Peredel], insisted on the traditional focus on mass work among the peasants.

Narodnaya Volya's success in killing the Tsar, on 1st March 1881, only led to its decimation by repression. Meanwhile, the development of the working class was beginning to cut the ground from under Populism. The central leadership, round Plekhanov, of the short-lived Chernyi Peredel group, had gone over to Marxism, forming, in 1883, the Emancipation of Labour group.

Plekhanov argued categorically that Russia had already entered the process of capitalist development and had no choice but to go through it. The most important classes in Russia were therefore not the peasantry, but the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx and Engels were not initially well-disposed to Plekhanov's group. It had, wrote Marx, "abandoned Russia voluntarily — in contrast to the terrorists whose heads are at stake — to form a so-called propaganda party. In order to carry out propaganda in Russia, they come to Geneva. How is that for a quid pro quo?"

The growth of the Russian working class, and particularly of its strike movements in the 1890s, vindicated Plekhanov's position and convinced Engels of its correctness. The Populists, defeated in their efforts to provide immediate validation

of their ideas through peasant uprisings or terrorist operations, tried to construct theoretical disproofs of the inevitability of capitalist development in Russia.

The Marxist movement in Russia took shape in the 1890s, carrying out a debate with the Populists — many of whom also based themselves on Marx's analyses — over the problem of the development of capitalism and the capitalist market in Russia. The debate did not only include those, like Lenin, who rejected the Populist illusions in favour of independent working-class activity, but also the 'Legal Marxists' [so called because their forum was the theoretical literature which was legal under the Tsarist censorship], who focused entirely on the progressive character of capitalist development, skimming over its contradictions, and thus used Marxism as a bridge to bourgeois liberalism.

In part 1 of the present article, Stan Lomax analyses the three points of view — Populist, Legal Marxist, and revolutionary Marxist — advanced in the debates of the 1890s.



THERE WERE THREE main schools of thought in the debate over the development of capitalism in Russia, as it proceeded in the 1890s.

### 1. THE LEGAL POPULISTS

The question of the uniqueness of Russia's social-economic development was first raised in any cogent form by the Slavophiles in 1830-40 (Aksakov, Khomyakov, Samarin et al). In accordance with their idealist conceptions of Russian social development being a manifestation of "national spirit", they considered the Russian land commune as the social form that would enable Russia to avoid the capitalist path of development.

Herzen also accepted the possibility of avoiding capitalist development via the communal spirit of "the people".

This notion that Russia could achieve socialism not by the dictatorship of the proletariat (it was a tiny force at that time, and not organised), but through the commune and the peasantry, formed the basis for the programmes of revolutionary populism in the 1860s. Populism developed through the great



movement of "going to the peasantry", which attempted, without any response, to rouse the peasants against Tsarism; from that to terrorism; and then, in the '80s, to the abandonment of revolutionary struggle by the majority of populists. By this time the Narodnaya Volya had already split, spawning the nascent Russian Marxist movement.

However, the populists of the '80s, the "legal Populists", did their best to ground their Russian exceptionalism in Marxist theory, at least as far as economics was concerned. Marx had been at pains to point out that his generalisations in "Capital", on the expropriation of the agricultural producer being the inevitable basis for capitalist development, related to Western Europe. Given favourable socialist international developments, capitalism was not inevitable in Russia, with its communal forms.

"If Russia continues to pursue the path she has followed since 1861, she will lose the finest chance ever offered by history to a people, and undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime". (Marx to "Otechestvenniye Zapiski", Nov. 1877).

Further:

"Thus the analysis given in "Capital" assigns no reasons for or against the vitality of the rural community, but.... the materials for which I obtained from original sources, has convinced me that this community is the mainspring of Russia's social regeneration, but in order that it **might** function as such, **one would first have to eliminate the deleterious influences which assail it from every quarter...**" (Marx to V. Zasulich, 8th March, 1881: my emphasis, SL).

The demise of the commune as an institution providing a possible basis for the transition to socialism and communism was left for Engels to observe:

"I am afraid we shall have to treat the obshchina as a dream of the past, and reckon, in the future, with the capitalist Russia. No doubt a great chance is thus being lost, but against economic facts there is no help". (Engels to N. F. Danielson, 15th March, 1892).

The Legal Populists sought to magnify Marx's tentative remarks about Russia, stripping them of their qualifications. They accepted his economic analysis of the development of West European capitalism, but, for Russia, while drawing on the whole Slavophile tradition, they attempted to provide **theoretical** justification for their most intense feelings regarding the possibilities of avoiding the miseries of capitalism, which were already taking hold.

How did they do this?

A number of formidable theoreticians of the Narodnik school including N—N (Danielson), advanced the following theses:

[a] Capitalism, insofar as it had developed in Russia was an "artificial" transplant onto Russian "natural" (peasant) society. It had been grafted on by the State and was not based on the previous development of commodity production.

[b] As capitalism developed, the market inevitably shrank. The mass of the poor became poorer, being converted into day labourers or unemployed. (There were at least as many unemployed as industrial workers). The Populists used the labour theory of value to "prove" that since machinery produces no value, technological advance and capital accumulation presupposes and implies less wages for labour. Because of this shrinkage of the home market, surplus value could not be realised there.

[c] Accordingly, the product could only be realised in foreign markets, or by expanding into non-capitalist areas; but these markets were themselves becoming gradually glutted, as other nations got there before.

[d] Capitalism could not really develop; all it could do was ruin age-old ways of life and wreak poverty and unhappiness on the masses.

[e] The way out of this was through the unfettered agricultural and home-handicraft development of the peasant communes (obshchina).

Thus the Populists justified their idealisation of communal relations.

## 2. THE LEGAL MARXISTS

The Legal Marxists were bourgeois and petit-bourgeois intellectuals who adopted some of the forms of Marxist thought. As Trotsky put it: "The sharp knife of Marxism was the instrument by which the bourgeois intelligentsia cut the Populist umbilical cord, and severed itself from a hated past... As soon as Marxism had accomplished this, however, it began to irk this same intelligentsia. Its dialectics were convenient for demonstrating the progress of capitalist methods of development, but finding that it led to a revolutionary rejection of the whole capitalist system, they adjudged it an impediment and declared it out of date.... They accepted its historical justification of capitalism, but discarded its rejection of capitalism by revolutionary means. In this roundabout way

the old Populist intelligentsia, with its archaic sympathies, was slowly being transformed into a liberal bourgeois intelligentsia" ('My Life', p.128).

For example, Struve in his autobiography stated that he saw "Socialism... (as a)... remote ideal, while the struggle for civil and political liberties was a vital task... I was interested in Socialism chiefly as an ideological force, which... could be turned either for or against the conquest of civil and political liberties" [★1].

Berdaev, in his autobiography, saw Marxism as representing an intellectual rigour, the introduction of European culture into backward Russia: "Actually, I was not much of a political revolutionary, and displayed little activity in this respect..." [★2]; and Bulgakov maintained that Marxism for him was a means of substituting one faith (his father was a priest and he had been to a seminary) by another — that of "the future of man". There was no other culture than that of the intelligentsia, he said, and Marxism seemed the world view of the young intelligentsia. So, he accepted it as "the only possible and available world view for 'intelligent people'" [★3].

Their 'Marxism' was of an economic-determinist kind, mixed eclectically with various empirical and phenomenalist philosophical fashions. Struve, for instance, felt that "science of society" and "logic" eliminated the individual and were concerned only with groups and with general laws that transcended individuals. Bulgakov went so far as to say that one could predict the future in human affairs on the basis of laws and regular relationships, just like in nature. And Struve, in 1894, even said that Marx's works on capitalism were so objective that it was possible to adopt his analysis without becoming a socialist [★4].

Lenin attacked Struve's "The Fate of Capitalism in Russia" (1894) for its "narrow objectivism, which is confined to proving the inevitability and necessity of the process and makes no effort to reveal at each specific stage of this process the form of class contradiction inherent in it" [★5].

The Legal Marxists were to go over into open anti-Marxism — into the bourgeois camp, the camp of the aristocracy, or the Church — as the working class began to mobilise independently, around the turn of the century. That course was foreshadowed, not only in their economic determinism, but in their economic theories themselves, whose schematic character neither allowed for the active struggle of social classes nor even permitted an adequate reply to the Legal

Populists.

### THE 'INEXORABLE' DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM

For Struve, capitalism in the West was guaranteeing a constantly rising standard of living for the workers, and therefore the task for Russia was clear — “from a poor capitalist country to become a wealthy capitalist country” [★6]. He saw the complete break-up of the commune as progressive and inevitable, as was the development of class differentiations in the villages, and the continuing growth of an urban population. These were to be the “powerful levers for the development of Russian culture” [★7].

The Legal Populists advocated government policies to inaugurate a period of balanced economic development and significant improvement of the lot of the peasants through an encouragement of communal and handicraft production. The Legal Marxists counterposed the view that mass suffering was an inevitable process in the transition to a fully-fledged exchange economy that would lead to the full development of a Russian capitalism on the model of Western Europe, and this was the only means to gain political and civil liberties. In the meantime, even reforms that seemed to favour the working class had to be rejected if they were inconsistent with the “inexorable laws” of economic development (Struve [★8], Tugan-Baranovsky [★9]).

As part of the ‘inexorable’ process, the kulaks should be encouraged. Thus, Struve [★10] supported **high** grain prices, as favouring the development of capitalism. The poorer peasants would be forced to spend even more on grain (they could not produce enough to live on), and so the richer and more efficient peasants would rise further above them, at their expense. The poorer would be forced into the rural or urban proletariat — where they belonged!

Struve opposed the restrictions placed on the introduction of joint stock enterprise by the autocracy. He was also for productivity increases regardless of the effects on the workers in the short term. In other words, Struve and his school identified progress with unrestricted bourgeois development. Independent working class action could only impede this progress. The only role for the working class was to support necessary reforms benefitting bourgeois production. And this was Struve still a socialist, and, in 1898, author of the Manifesto of the abortive First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party!

## THE PROBLEM OF MARKETS

The main point of contention with the Populists was the problem of markets.

Struve's rebuttal was rather empiricist and speculative. He based his model on American capitalism, arguing that high wages for workers and a prosperous farmer class had provided the markets for US industry — and therefore the same would apply for Russia as capitalism trod its inexorable path.

Struve accused the Populist theorist V—V of erring in only taking capitalists and industrial workers into consideration as regards consumption. What V—V should have considered, said Struve, was the growing army of "third persons", i.e. civil servants, professionals, rural consumers, who would provide the market for goods which workers could not absorb [★11]. This 'third person' later became the peasant, becoming an important consumer through the differentiation of wealthy and poor in the rural population [★12]. In addition, said Struve, there were vast areas of Asiatic Russia and Central Asia available to Russian producers to expand into. Struve thus echoed List's "National Economy" thesis, to the effect that Russia might grow entirely on the basis of a **domestic** market, without the **foreign** market, even if the necessary markets were not yet present in Russia to obviate foreign trade.

In fact Struve implicitly accepts V—V's underconsumptionist arguments relating to the viability of realising surplus value under capitalism. At best, the problem would merely be postponed. V—V could lump civil servants and so on with the capitalists (essentially they consume part of the surplus value, as do the capitalists). He could point out that expansion of these "third persons" beyond a certain number would start to interfere with capital accumulation and thus his arguments about an expansion of capital necessitating an impoverishment of workers and a shrinking of the home market would apply again.

V—V accepted the existence of differentiation in the rural population, to an extent; but with that differentiation, rural capitalists would be counterposed to rural workers and unemployed, and the total problem would still reduce to capitalist expansion at the expense of workers.

Finally, V—V could say, even if he accepted Struve's argument about the possibility of expansion into a non-capitalist home market, that when that environment had been fully exploited, the problem of glutted foreign markets would again raise its head.



Tugan-Baranovsky's answer [★13] to the Populists on the market question was ingenious, but scholastic. He went to the other extreme. Capitalism could develop with little or no consumer market at all. If capitalists continually re-invested their profits in capital goods instead of consumer goods, then the progress of industry would in no way be impeded. And, to prevent disproportionalities, production could be planned so that supply and demand for such goods always balance each other.

Luxemburg acidly commented that Struve, Bulgakov, and Tugan-Baranovsky "proved" not only the possibilities of capitalism, but the indefinite possibilities of a "crisis-free" capitalism, and, therefore, the impossibility of socialism.

Lenin, in contrast to the Legal Marxists, attacked the Populist conceptions in a rigorous scientific way. He showed how capitalism was feasible and how it was necessarily prone to crisis, and how the empirical manifestations of capitalism, which indicated the extent of capitalist development, could be accounted for theoretically.

Tugan-Baranovsky did show the **possibility** of capitalist expansion, and one could construct mathematical models based on Marx's value schemata in Vol. II of "Capital" to "prove" this. But the law of value is asserted in the realisation of the capital accumulation process via crisis and disruption, as an underlying reality of the total process. It is not realised directly in a smooth, continuous fashion. Marx himself showed this in vol. III of "Capital". Accordingly, exact planning under capitalism is a nonsense. Furthermore, in accordance with the premises of the labour theory of value, which show that machinery and constant capital in general does not create any new values, the expansion of capital necessarily entails an expansion of capitalistically-utilised labour power and workers employed, and a rise in aggregate consumption (not necessarily to the same extent: in fact, **individual** consumption could diminish with an increase in labour power), and, therefore, a consumer market which expands to some extent. These tendencies may be counteracted for short periods, but they must operate overall.

### 3. LENIN

The most convincing rebuttal to the Populists came from Lenin in "On the So-Called Market Question" (1893), in "A Characterisation of Economic Romanticism" (1897), and in the monumental "The Development of Capitalism in Russia"

(1899). He drew on Volgin's (Plekhanov's) work, "The Basis of Populism in the Works of V—V" (1896), but he developed his own theoretical conceptions and worked up the data for himself.

He attacked the controversy **firstly** in a theoretical way, and then showed how his theories explained the empirical developments, which he painstakingly researched.

Lenin's key points can be summarised as follows:

The "proof" of the shrinkage of the home market is based on the fallacy, adopted by Adam Smith, Sismondi, Ricardo, and others, that the entire annual product of capitalist production comprises **two** parts — the workers' part (wages — variable capital) and the capitalists' part (surplus value). all of which are articles of consumption; that if capitalism grows, the surplus value becomes overabundant and cannot be realised on the home market, as surplus value can only grow at the expense of wages, which must necessarily shrink both in relation to the former and absolutely.

But, Lenin pointed out, the total social product also consists of constant capital (machinery, raw materials, buildings etc.) to replace that worn out, **and**, for expansion to take place, additional constant capital. Not only that, but capitalism **can** expand in the face of an impoverishment of the masses in relation to the total social product†, as, for capital to expand, production of means of production expands much quicker than means of consumption, which themselves expand as more workers are taken into the productive process. Thus, capitalism creates a market for itself. This development proceeds via contradictions and crises, but it **can** and does go ahead as long as capitalism continues. All that is required is that more labour power be brought into the productive process§, with a consequent rise in the labour force and aggregate demand for goods. This is quite compatible with an increase in the wages

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† An absolute impoverishment is **not** necessary, although Lenin did lean in that direction in parts of his analysis. It is a product of specific historical circumstances. Lenin was quite prepared to concede to V—V that such absolute impoverishment of the masses had happened in Russia since the Emancipation, while recognising that capitalism does create "increasing requirements" for them. (See "On the So-Called Market Question", pp. 31-32).

§ There are **exceptional** periods when expansion of surplus value and capital accumulation, takes place with an increase in the working day, in the intensity of labour, and/or the intensity of exploitation with the same or diminishing labour force. See "Capital" vol.1 parts III and IV.

of individual workers drawn into wage labour, or an absolute diminution in the wages of individual workers, while the total wages could be expanding with a growth in the mass of the "surplus" population and an impoverishment of those rendered marginal to production by the advance of capitalist relations; and with the enrichment of a capitalist minority. Lenin demonstrated this process theoretically, using Marx's reproduction schemata<sup>||</sup> to show that the product could be realised and that therefore the "underconsumptionist" version of capitalist breakdown was vacuous.

The Malthusianism of Sismondi, bemoaning the overpopulation consequent on capitalist development, was echoed by the Populists and Struve on post-Reform developments in Russia. Lenin showed how a relative overpopulation was inherent in the progress of the capitalist cycle, irrespective of capitalism making incursions into non-capitalist areas, and, accordingly, assisted the recovery and growth of capitalism, rather than necessarily signalling its demise.

The root of market expansion, says Lenin, lies with continuing specialisation and differentiation in the division of labour.

Capitalism could not have been transplanted onto a society which did not have a certain development of commodity production — production for exchange — already. Lenin did not deny the role of the state in Russia in forcing development, but he denied the possibility of capitalism being conjured up from nothing by the whims of the state. There must already have been a certain division of labour, a certain move away from natural economy (exclusive production of use values) and a development of exchange, a certain development of private production and social differentiation.

Accordingly, Lenin showed that the notion, advanced by G B Krasin in "The Market Question", that expansion of capitalism can come about by sucking natural production into the capitalist sector and therefore enlarging that sector, is a nonsense. Capitalism can effect exchange with products that

<sup>||</sup> With the qualifications mentioned above, i.e. that the schemata do not represent an even process; but the underlying reality of a crisis-ridden development.

are produced capitalistically, or merely produced as residual to immediate consumption purposes, or both. Therefore, even a non-capitalist, commodity sector is **not** necessary for the expansion and accumulation of capital.

Hence, there are no limits, except those placed by capitalist production relations themselves at any given period, on the development of the market. These limits are set by the contradictory relations between the necessary continual accumulation of capital and the limitation of the consumption of the masses at any given juncture, each of which conditions the other within the framework of capitalist competition [★14].

So, the argument that surplus value can only be realised on foreign markets does not hold, says Lenin. Goods exchanged on foreign markets are merely exchanged for equivalents (more or less), so the problem would still remain.

It is true that capitalism needs foreign markets, but for reasons other than the realisation problem. Capitalism makes its appearance with widely developed commodity **circulation** already established. So foreign trade develops, however small it be at that stage, **prior** to the development of capitalism, creating the mutual dependence of producers in different countries. As capitalism develops, and its branches develop unevenly in producing for an **unknown** market, the already-developed overseas network will be utilised and expanded, especially if a competitive edge can be acquired by selling abroad in the never-ending quest for profit. The local and national boundaries are, accordingly, transcended by capitalist production. "Since the isolation and seclusion of the states have already been broken down by commodity circulation, the natural trend of every capitalist industry brings it to the necessity of 'seeking a foreign market'" [★15].



The idealisation of peasant commune life was both producer and product of the theoretical errors of the Populists. Thus, they invented a not-so-distant past in which every man was a more or less equal master of his own destiny, where everyone was accordingly happy and self-fulfilled. The existence of commodity and capitalist relations **prior** to machine production (which was equated with capitalism), was glossed over. Accordingly, peasant communal production was equated with "people's production", which was being undermined, by the alien import of "non-national" capitalism. Yet, insofar

as communal relations continued, they were the hope for the future — the internal relations of commune agriculture were painted up with a rosy egalitarian hue, as was the independence, cooperativeness and vigour of the village handicrafts.



Lenin produced a mass of evidence to substantiate his theoretical attacks.

As well as the continuing growth of the towns; the faster growth in the number of industrial workers since the Emancipation relative to the peasantry; the tremendous increases in production and productivity; the growing concentration of industry and of the labour force; the spectacular growth of certain new industries — Lenin detailed the processes accompanying the subordination of peasant production, private and communal (and communal production was private in its own way), to the capitalist market. The most important processes, especially in relation to the commune peasantry, the Populists' ideal vehicle for the non-capitalist future, were:

[a] The differentiation of the small producers amongst themselves.

[b] Masses of peasants becoming, in a thirty year period, proletarians or semi-proletarians, or surplus to requirements as peasants were dispossessed or were unable to make even a subsistence living from their own land. In his 1893 pamphlet [★16] Lenin contended that the areas he examined using census data, as typical communes, showed one half of all peasants holding only 13% of the total farming area. Their average crop area was 3 to 4 dessiatins per household, as against an estimated subsistence minimum of 17 to 18 dessiatins.

[c] Hand in hand with this development, a relatively small number of peasants were becoming wealthier; were adopting improved farming methods; were becoming a market for agricultural implements as well as consumer goods; were renting allotments from poorer peasants as well as leasing and buying up privately-owned land, most often nobles' land. Again, in 1893 Lenin showed that about one-fifth of the peasantry held more than 50% of the total crop area; had anything up to two or three times the subsistence requirements; had the most productive land, obviously (economies of scale, consolidation of strips, use, to an extent, of modern farming implements);



**sold** the bulk of their agricultural product and the overwhelming proportion of all grain going to the market; were the group which hired labourers and which accumulated money, as well as (some of them) becoming large employers of capitalised domestic production and village factories.

[d] The village handicrafts were feeble to start with. The mass of artisans were becoming poorer and poorer; an insignificant minority were growing rich at the expense of the mass, who were being proletarianised into a system of domestic and factory work under the control of capitalists, some of whom were former rich artisans. With the domination of handicrafts by the market, **all** section of the peasantry were being forced to buy, to an ever increasing degree, capitalistically manufactured commodities.



Lenin concluded that capitalism was an ongoing, viable development; but a development with contradictions, not least of which was the development of a working class. The development of capitalism in the towns and "de-peasantising" in the country went hand in hand. Even if the communes still provided a certain brake on capitalist development, due to social and economic institutions there and to the restricted consuming power of the peasantry, it was utopian to look to them as a source of anti-capitalist inspiration.

**Part 2 of this article will appear in "International Communist" no. 5. Footnotes for both parts will be found at the end of part 2.**

# Lutte Ouvrière & Trotskyist Unity

**FOR MANY YEARS** the French Trotskyist group LUTTE OUVRIERE has organised international conferences "open to all the tendencies of the working class movement which adopt revolutionary Marxism as a reference and are committed to the building of a revolutionary working class party". The 7th of these conferences took place in October 1976. Following the "Address to the Trotskyist Movement" which we re-

publish here [from "Lutte de Classe" no. 34], LO has also taken the initiative in organising a series of international conferences [three so far] with the aim of establishing a 'permanent framework of discussion' between groups owing allegiance to Trotskyism.

The I-CL has participated in many of these conferences. Here we outline the main points of our debate with Lutte Ouvrière.

## PUTTING AN END TO THE CRUMBLING

### OF THE TROTSKYIST MOVEMENT

Nearly forty years after the founding of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist movement is the only one—on an international scale—to refer to the necessity of an independent proletarian political line and organization, and to set as its goal the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat—on the level of its basic programmatic formulations.

There are other currents which make more or less explicit references to proletarian revolution—in particular the so-called «state capitalist» groups and their various offshoots. But they never structured themselves on an international scale and have in fact even abandoned the very idea. They were never able to elaborate a political line of their own. Most of them define themselves with respect to the Trotskyist movement, out of which the majority of them come.

As for the so-called «Maoist» groups, though they exist in almost every country and though they even have a notable influence in a number of under-developed countries, they represent (that is, when they represent anything at all) populist currents, the aim of which is quite openly to put the working class in the tow of bourgeois interests. When these organizations are able to develop, their explicit abandonment of the proletarian camp causes them to become organizations representing interests other than those of the proletariat.

The most important aspects of the international Trotskyist movement are by far the two following facts: first, it has maintained, at least in its programmatic references, the political continuity of the revolutionary movement, successively embodied in the International Workingmen's Association of Marx and Engels, in the Second International until World War I, in the Communist International of the 1919-1923 period, and ultimately in the Left Opposition and the Fourth International founded by Léon Trotsky; secondly, it was the only movement to maintain this tradition during a difficult period, against classical reformism, against Stalinism, and against the different varieties of «Third-Worldism», despite their Marxist cover.

Thanks to this maintenance of political continuity, today, after decades during which the revolutionary movement had no real influence on the working-class movement, new generations can be trained and educated as proletarian revolutionaries.

However, it must be admitted that the Trotskyist movement has not been able to give itself a living, competent, and efficient international leadership, recognized as such by all the forces of the Trotskyist movement.

The emergency of an International, of a world party of the revolution, recognized as a leadership by important fractions of the proletariat itself, of course largely surpasses the mere problem of the will or the competence of proletarian revolutionary organizations. The emergence of an International is not dependent only upon the ability of the organizations to measure up to the tasks of the hour on the ideological and practical levels.

Nevertheless the responsibility of the organizations that make up the Trotskyist movement is great, in the sense that today there does not even exist an international leadership corresponding to the present possibilities of the movement and to its development. The inability to maintain the organizational unity of the movement and the inability to train an international leadership recognized by all the Trotskyist groups are of course two aspects of the same problem.

The scattering of the Trotskyist movement is shown by the number of rival international leaderships, each of which has a variable audience; by the existence of a great number of Trotskyist organizations belonging to none of the existing international bodies; and by the type of relationships existing within each of these international bodies, which are often formal or even fictitious relationships.

No responsible Trotskyist organization, which really wants the Trotskyist movement to play the role that it should, can accept this division, this scattering of groups which is not justified by any programmatic view.

Of course, part of the existing disagreements between Trotskyist groups rest on questions of vital importance. But it is precisely only inside a Trotskyist

movement capable of doing away with sectarianism and ostracism, and of allowing a large-scale confrontation of ideas, that the different analyses can be valuably discussed.

Such a confrontation, on the present situation of the Trotskyist movement, on the analysis of the causes of its scattering, and on a critical balance-sheet of its evolution since Trotsky's death, appears clearly as a vital and urgent necessity.

No proclamation, address, or unilateral appeal will ever be able to solve a problem concerning the whole of the Trotskyist movement.

It is indispensable that an international framework for such a confrontation be set up. This proposition is not at all incompatible with working toward an International based on the rules of democratic centralism. On the contrary, to try and put an end to the scattered state of the Trotskyist movement is the best way to work toward the building of a democratic and centralized international organization.

Will such an organization be created around one of the existing international organizations? Will it be the fruit of a larger restructuring, and on other bases? The proposed confrontation will have to deal with these questions among others, because there are great differences of opinion as to this problem between the organizations which are members of international bodies and those which are not.

However, the starting point of this discussion must be the undeniable fact that an international organization having a political authority over the whole of the Trotskyist movement does not exist. This remains an aim which must be reached by the organizations existing today. Our task is to build a democratic centralized international organization starting with the presently scattered groups.

The democratic centralism of the international organization to be built will not be suspended in mid-air. It cannot be simply the result of correct statutes. It implies a basic agreement on the program. It also implies a mutual political trust on the part of the groups making up the international organization, as well as the trust of all groups and of all their militants toward the leadership.

This trust between groups and this trust toward the leadership of the other groups do not exist at the present time. Unless one group is able to lead significant struggles of the proletariat in its own country and to prove through action that it deserves the political trust of the other groups, the sectarianism which is characteristic of the relations between Trotskyist organizations today will forever preclude the possibility of doing away with the groups' respective distrust.

The only other way to overcome this distrust is through a loyal confrontation of the points of view and through a common activity. These should be started right away in all possible fields and can be extended afterwards to encompass all the activities of the groups concerned.

In the face of the present sad situation of a scattered Trotskyist movement whose sectarianism prevents the first steps toward a solution to be undertaken, the undersigned organizations have taken the initiative to address themselves to the whole of the Trotskyist movement in order to set up an international framework wherein could be discussed the ways and means of creating an international forum within which all the different trends of the Trotskyist movement could coexist.

The framework proposed by the undersigned is not to become a new international body in competition with those already existing.

Neither is it to become a mere discussion group though it will have to play this role to the fullest, by allowing the participants to outline their points of agreement and disagreement, thus contributing to the clarification needed by the Trotskyist movement.

The undersigned are conscious that the honest confrontation of points of view is just a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of a political program for the world revolutionary struggle of our epoch. Beyond this, the positions of each will have to undergo the test of actual political struggles. The existence of a program adopted by the whole of the movement implies the existence of an international leadership recognized as such by the movement.

The undersigned organizations consider that, along with the discussion of the important problems of the Trotskyist movement, the proposed framework must examine the political and organizational help that the various groups can give to each other.

It will be up to the participating groups to determine the degree of collaboration they wish to establish, according to their own needs and to their own political and organizational capacities.

If, beyond the actual differences, the participating organizations deeply want to work toward a closer and closer collaboration; if they feel a concern for the political and organizational problems of the other groups; if they do all they can in order that—beyond the relationships between leaderships—closer and closer ties be established through the exchange of militants, the circulation of discussion material, etc., then, the possibility will exist for the establishment of relationships based on trust which in the future will form one basis of an ever-growing common discipline; then, leaders accepted by all will be selected and trained.

Paris, February 1976

Lutte Ouvrière	(France)
Spark	(U.S.A.)
Combat Ouvrier	(West Indies)
UATCI	(Africa)

# The politics of Lutte Ouvrière

**"Leninism cannot be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material bases of the political process. The weapon of Marxist investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that [revolutionary] tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal reference...."**

Trotsky's insistence has not stopped modern Leninism (Trotskyism) also becoming a stifling 'orthodoxy' in the hands of some of its advocates. It is not a matter here of a material basis for conservatism, as in the case of the Stalinist epigones of Lenin against whom Trotsky polemicised, but rather of the dehydrating effects of sectarianism. That dehydration can have a relative justification in a period of reflux of the revolutionary movement; but for communists today, the new developments since Trotsky's death (expansion of Stalinism, changed tempos of world capitalism) must be responded to somehow, explicitly or implicitly, deliberately or by default.

The worst of the 'orthodox' are the 'anti-Pabloites', who combine incoherent deployment of chunks of 'doctrine' against the 'Pabloites' with borrowing of their basic concepts and analysis. **Lutte Ouvrière's** tradition is more respect-worthy.

In the dark hours of October 1939, with the French Trotskyist movement in political and organisational chaos, a small group of comrades decided to break away from what they saw as its incorrigible petty bourgeois methods. **"And we want to make it clear that it is not because we had an original political position on this or that question that we have stood apart from the Fourth International since 1940, or at least from the organisations which claimed to be it..."**

**"We took this responsibility for much more serious reasons; because the organisational practices first of the PCI, then of the reconstructed Fourth International, appeared to us unworthy of a proletarian revolutionary organisation"** (*"Lutte de Classe"* [LDC], 1967-8 series, no.11).

The group set about trying to show that proletarian-oriented work could be done on the basis of the Trotskyist programme, and to establish **"a favourable record of struggle"** in the working class (LDC, 67-8, no.10).

In 1949 the group collapsed, crushed in the ruins of a breakaway union which it had got involved in following the great Renault strike of 1947. The LO tendency was thus **absent** when, in the years following 1948, the Trotskyist movement wrestled with the problems of the revolutions in Yugoslavia and China and



the social transformations in Eastern Europe.

Reborn in 1956, the proto-LO group was a political Rip Van Winkle. In contrast to every other current, it declared that **nothing essential had changed** in Eastern Europe and China. These were not deformed workers' states, or even state-capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist: They were simply an extreme variant of bourgeois state.

The 'world revolutionary process' of which the International Secretariat, International Committee, and United Secretariat tendencies speak so dizzily, did not exist for LO. The focus of their attention is the day-by-day painstaking accumulation of cadres in the factories. The world is essentially unchanged, and will remain so until that accumulation has reached the level of the creation of a revolutionary workers' party.

LO's outlook is an **inversion** of post-1948-51 mainstream Trotskyism. Where the mainstream Trotskyists focus on the high-flying 'rise of the world revolution' and their chances of gearing into it, LO resolutely writes "Balance: Zero" below all those developments and turns its gaze to ground level.

Where the programme is an optimum scenario for the mainstream Trotskyists, it is doctrinaire propaganda for LO. More accurately, it is not **just** basic doctrine, but rather codified principles of 1938 **plus technique**. What is missing from their concept of programme is ongoing analysis, a living summary of active political responses.

In this way LO arrives at its concept of the broad 'Trotskyist movement'. The movement includes all referring to the basic political definition-point, the codified principles of 1938, albeit that some lack the **organisational seriousness** to

give these principles life in the proletarian movement, and thus fall into petty bourgeois opportunism.

The "**ruin**" of the Fourth International was "**the result not of an erroneous political line, but of abominable organisational practices...**", or "**not because they called themselves Trotskyists, but because their organisational practices, their very conception of the work to be done, had nothing in common with Bolshevism**" (LDC, 67-8. no.10).

And the solution was, essentially, organisational methodology: "**... we are convinced that it is this organisational methodology which allowed us in 1940 to take the only positions compatible with the programme of the Fourth International, just as we are sure that the absence of such a methodology led, and will again lead, numerous Trotskyist organisations into the arms of all sorts of petty bourgeois currents profoundly alien to Marxism... the absence or the abandonment of organisational methods designed to remove from their ranks petty bourgeois elements incapable of breaking away from their class transformed the petty bourgeois social character of the Trotskyist movement into political opportunism..... in the absence of a Bolshevik organisational methodology, simple fidelity to the programme cannot suffice to save the Trotskyist organisations from the fatal influence of the petty bourgeoisie**" (LDC, 67-8, no.2).

"The fact that a group takes as its reference point the Trotskyist programme [which to our minds is the revolutionary Marxist programme for our period] is certainly not sufficient in itself to protect them from opportunist mistakes. Unfortunately, the politics of most of the Trotskyist organisations is

there to prove the contrary. For when there are no rigorous organisational methods enabling a small revolutionary organisation to escape if only partially the pressure exerted by the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, such a check does not exist..." (LDC, new series, no.24).

The timeless identification of Bolshevism with organisational strictness is in truth anti-Bolshevik: for the essence of Bolshevism consists in the complete subordination of organisation to politics, and the ability to modify organisational forms with the utmost flexibility to correspond to sharp political turns.

Likewise the concept of the family of Trotskyism and of a federal International of all nominal Trotskyists as intermediate step to a democratic-centralist Trotskyist International (see LDC 30, LDC, 67-8, no. 11: the catalyst for the progress from the federal to the democratic-centralist International is apparently the authority those with the "Bolshevik organisational methodology" gain through their "favourable record in the class struggle") is anti-Trotskyist. It belongs rather to pre-Marxist socialism, where currents were defined by their reference to one or another set of principles for world improvement. Marxism, and more especially Leninism, insisted instead on a critical assessment of currents in their relation to the living class struggle. For us, the fact that a current tailing social-democracy and accommodating to Zionism (like the OCI of France) avows "orthodox Trotskyism" makes it worse, not better, than a 'naive' social-democratic/Zionist current. The distortion and abuse of the basic concepts of Trotskyism compounds the infamy of the OCI's positions on current political

questions.

LO's reduction of Marxism to basic codified principles plus technique is reflected in a consistently quietist and routinist practice (though their routine of factory work is, as such, a **good** routine, and one that the I-CL has consciously tried to learn from and adapt). The debate at the international conferences over one situation after another — France, Italy, Spain, Portugal... — found LO saying that there were no revolutionary political possibilities, that indeed there could not be any since no mass revolutionary party existed, and that all that could be done was daily organisation and education. Portugal, they said, gave these indications for Spain (LO paper for conference of 23-4 October 1976): "**The struggle to utilise ... all the possibilities given... by the government's policy... Taking advantage of the situation to organise workers on the trade union as well as the political level. Training competent and devoted militants and educating the working class in a socialist perspective...**"

The debate was posed most clearly over Portugal, at the 31 October-1 November conference. LO argued that the policy of revolutionaries in 1975 should have been for a united front with SP, CP and left MFA for workers' elementary demands and for the defence of their gains.

If all the most advanced workers could do was propose the defence and modest extension of already-acquired gains, then it was incomprehensible how the working class had made those gains — which included fragmentary establishment of workers' control and of embryonic organs of dual power. In reality such gains could be taken forward only by the proletariat "becoming

conscious of its own interests as a class" (LO's phrase) — which did not mean, as LO seemed to think, well-organised militant trade unionism, but the struggle for a workers' militia, for the extension of the dual power organs, and for a workers' government based on them. Such a struggle might well have met with defeat, even if the revolutionaries leading it made no mistakes. But there was no other way to "base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle".

LO replied with a schema of pre-conditions for revolution against which Heinrich Brandler, hesitant leader of the German CP in the muffed uprising of 1923 analysed by Trotsky in "Lessons of October", would look like an incendiary. First Soviets had to be built. Then they must be centralised. Then they must win the majority. Then...

Although LO harshly criticised those revolutionaries who tailed the SP or the CP or the left MFA, their broad united-front orientation would have left revolutionaries tailing the SP and the CP and the left MFA, except in purely propagandist terms. The tailism was

shown further in LO's argument over "República", where they backed the SP management. They admitted there had been no real threat to the SP's right of self-expression. But, they said, what did the pro-SP workers think of it?

We had to reply that the logic of LO's argument was that revolutionaries should have said to the Portuguese workers: You have gone too far. Dismantle your workers' control, your workers' commissions, your Popular Assemblies, your rank and file soldiers' organisations. Settle down to normal trade union struggle and the production of factory bulletins. And then, perhaps, in 10-20 years' time, you will be able to take on the bourgeoisie.

To quote once again from "The New Course": "... every time objective conditions demand a new turn, a bold about-face, creative initiative, conservative resistance betrays a natural tendency to counterpose the 'old traditions', and what is called Old Bolshevism, but is in reality the empty husk of a period just left behind, to the new tasks, to the new conditions, to the new orientation".

**CHRIS REYNOLDS**

# The Workers Government

## Introduction

THE MATERIAL we reproduce here includes the major contributions in the debate at the 4th Congress of the Communist International (1922) on the question of the Workers' Government, and relevant section of the 4th Congress Theses on Tactics.

We have based ourselves on the two available English texts: the 'Bulletin of the 4th Congress' and the 'Report of the Moscow Conference 1922' later produced by the CPGB. The two texts are substantially similar, the 'Bulletin' being slightly fuller and the 'Report' appearing to include some corrections of mistakes in the 'Bulletin'. As a third text to check against we have used the German 'Protokoll' of the 4th Congress.

We publish this material as part of the discussion on the question of programme currently in progress in the I-CL. The last issue of 'International Communist', no. 2-3, included a text submitted for that discussion which gives an interpretation and statement of position on the workers' government question.

Just as the workers' government plays a pivotal role in the transitional programme, corresponding to the problem of linking day-to-day struggles within the present political system to the struggle to disrupt, overthrow, and replace that system, so the workers' government question is the clearest litmus test for the various conceptions of

programme current in the would-be Trotskyist movement.

The politics of 'pushing forward the revolutionary process' express themselves in calls for CP-SP, or Labour, governments, 'with socialist policies'. This is characteristic, in different ways, to different degrees, and at different times, of all the currents stemming from the 1951 Third World Congress: ISFI, USFI, ICFI. Their inversions, the syndicalist-leaning tendencies (IS/SWP, LO) have no use for the Workers' Government concept. And the most arid sectarians reduce the concept to abstentionist banality (the Spartacist tendency with their definition of workers' government as pseudonym for dictatorship of the proletariat).

Some passages in the 4th Congress contributions are cryptic; some leave open questions (e.g. the development of the Labour Party), which have since been definitely answered. The 4th Congress debate was, clearly, the opening of a discussion soon to be effectively cut short by the Stalinist degeneration of the CI.

Two points, however, are absolutely clear. Throughout the debate, the central role of the revolutionary party as active protagonist is crucial. And the slogans discussed are always related to concrete realities — they are never just clever formulae invented for purposes of literary 'exposure' or 'raising the question of power'. Both elements are completely absent from the 'Labour government with socialist policies' approach which is current in present-day 'Trotskyism'.

M.T.

# Theses on the Tactics of the C.I.

As a propagandist watchword the workers' government [and eventually of the workers' and peasants' government] is to be to be applied almost everywhere. But as a topical political watchword the workers' government is the most important only in those countries where the bourgeois society is particularly very unstable and where the balance of power between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie makes the decision on the question of government a practical necessity. In those countries the watchword of the workers' government is an unavoidable consequence of the United Front tactics.

The parties of the Second International in these countries endeavour to "save" the situation by propagating and bringing about coalition between the bourgeoisie and the social-democrats. The recent attempts of some of the parties of the Second International [for instance, in Germany] to refuse to participate openly in such a coalition government, and at the same time tacitly carry on a coalition policy, are nothing but a manoeuvre to keep the indignant masses quiet and to deceive them in the most cunning and shameful way. To such an open or disguised bourgeois social-democratic coalition, the Communists oppose a United Front of the workers, a coalition of all the workers' parties on the economic and political field for the struggle against the bourgeois power and for the final overthrow of the latter. Through the united struggle of all the workers against the bourgeoisie, the entire State machinery is to get into the hands of the workers' government, thus consolidating the positions of power of the working class.

The most elementary tasks of a workers' government must consist in arming the proletariat, in disarming the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisations, in introducing control of production, in putting the chief burden of taxation on the shoulders of the rich and in breaking down the

resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Such a workers' government is only possible if it arises out of the struggle of the masses and if it is based upon the support of active workers' organisations involving the lowest strata of the oppressed working masses. A workers' government which is the outcome of parliamentary groupings, that is to say, which is of purely parliamentary origin, may likewise become the occasion of a revival of the revolutionary movement. It is self-evident that the formation of a real workers' government and the continued existence of such a government whose policy is revolutionary, must lead to a bitter struggle and eventually to civil war with the bourgeoisie. The very attempt of the proletariat to establish such a government is bound to meet immediately with the most stubborn resistance on the part of the bourgeoisie. Therefore the watchword of the workers' government is likely to unite the proletariat and initiate revolutionary struggles.

Under certain circumstances the Communists must be prepared to form a government jointly with the non-Communist workers' parties and organisations. But, they can do this only in case there is the assurance that this workers' government will in good earnest carry on the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the above mentioned sense. Moreover the Communists can participate in such a government only on these self-evident conditions:—

[1] That participation in such a government must first have the consent of the Comintern.

[2] That the Communist representatives participating in such a government be under strictest control of their party.

[3] That the said Communist members of the workers' government be in close contact with the revolutionary organisations of the working masses.

[4] That the Communist party maintains its own character and complete independence in its agitational work.

With all its advantages, the watchword of the workers' government has its perils just as that of the United Front. In order to avoid such perils the Communist parties must bear in mind that every bourgeois government is at the same time a capitalist government, but that not every workers' government is a

really proletarian, i.e., a revolutionary instrument of the proletarian power.

The Communist International must anticipate the following possibilities:—

#### OSTENSIBLE WORKERS' GOVERNMENTS

[1] A Liberal Workers' Government, such as existed in Australia, and likely to be formed in Great Britain in the near future.

[2] A Social-Democratic "workers' government" (Germany).

#### TRUE WORKERS' GOVERNMENTS

[3] A Workers' and peasants' government—such a possibility exists in the Balkans, in Czechoslovakia etc.

[4] A Workers' government in which Communists participate.

[5] A real proletarian Workers' government which the Communist party alone can embody in a pure form.

★ The first two types are not revolutionary workers' government, but a disguised coalition between the bourgeoisie and anti-revolutionary groups. Such workers' governments are tolerated, at critical moments, by the weakened bourgeoisie, in order to dupe the workers as to the true class character of the state, or with aid of the corrupt leaders to divert the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat, and to gain time.

The Communists cannot take part in such governments. On the contrary, they must ruthlessly expose their true character to the masses. In this period of capitalist decline, when the main task is to win the majority of the proletarians for the proletarian revolution, such governments may serve as means to precipitate the destruction of bourgeois power.

The Communists are willing to make common cause also with those workers who have not yet recognised the necessity for proletarian dictatorship, with Social Democrats, Christian Socialists, non-party and Syndicalist workers. Thus, the Communists are prepared, under certain conditions and with certain guarantees, to support a non-Communist workers' government. At the same time, the Communists say to the masses quite openly that it is impossible to establish a real workers' government without a revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The other two types of workers' government [workers' and peasants' government and workers' government—with the participation of Communists] are not proletarian dictatorships, nor are they inevitable transition forms of government towards proletarian dictatorship, but where they are formed may serve as starting points for the struggle for dictatorship. Only the workers' government, consisting of Communists, can be the true embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

★ The German text is appreciably different from this point onwards. It runs as follows:—

The Communists are willing to make common cause also with those workers who have not yet recognised the necessity for proletarian dictatorship, with Social Democrats and non-party workers. Thus, the Communists are prepared, under certain conditions and with certain guarantees, even to support a merely ostensible workers' government (naturally only insofar as it represents the interests of the workers). At the same time, the Communists say to the workers quite openly that it is impossible to achieve or maintain a real workers' government without a revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. One can only describe as a true workers' government one which is resolute in taking up a serious struggle at least for the fulfilment of the most important day-to-day demands of the workers against the bourgeoisie. Communists can only take part in such a workers' government.

The first two types of ostensible workers' governments (liberal and Social-Democratic) are not revolutionary governments but can under certain conditions accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.

The other two types of workers' government ... [as in last paragraph of English text].



## Radek: Speech on the tactics of the CI.

When comrade Zinoviev at the extended Executive session said that the workers' government was to us a pseudonym for Proletarian Dictatorship — so he was quoted here by comrade Mayer — I think that definition was not right and that it was due to the misgiving which has been characterised here by comrade Fischer as trimming to the western style. To many comrades, the idea of a workers' government sounds like a sweet lullaby. They say: Dictatorship — the devil knows when that may come, at all events it is a difficult thing to carry on agitation under the banner of dictatorship; I will rather talk of "Workers' government", this sound so sweet and innocent.

Nobody knows what it means. Maybe something will come out of it. At any rate it does not sound so dangerous.

This should be done away with by our method of agitation. A workers' government is not the Proletarian Dictatorship, that is clear. It is one of the possible transitory stages to the proletarian dictatorship. The possibility of such a transitory stage is due to the fact the working masses in the West are not so amorphous politically as in the East. They are members of parties and they stick to their parties. In the East, in Russia, it was easier to bring them into the fold of communism after the outbreak of the revolutionary storm. In your countries it is much more difficult. The German, Norwegian and Czechoslovakian workers will more readily declare against coalition with the bourgeoisie, preferring a coalition of labour parties which would guarantee the 8 hour day, and an extra crust of bread, etc. A Workers' Party usually arises in this manner either through preliminary struggles or on the basis of a parliamentary combination, and it would be folly to turn aside the opportunities of such a situation in stubborn doctrinaire fashion.

Now the question arises — shall we recline upon this soft cushion and take a good rest, or shall we rather lead the masses into the fight on the basis of their own illusions

for the realisation of the programme of a Workers' Government? If we conceive the Workers' Government as a soft cushion, we are ourselves politically beaten. We would then take our place beside the social-democrats as a new type of tricksters. On the other hand, if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers' Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils to compel it to hold on to the right track and make no compromise to the Right, making that government a starting point for the struggle for Proletarian Dictatorship, such a Workers' Government will eventually make room for a Soviet Government and not become a soft cushion, but rather a lever for the conquest of power by revolutionary means. I believe one of the comrades has said, "The Workers' Government is not a historic necessity but a historical possibility". This is, to my mind, a correct formula. It would be absolutely wrong to assert that the development of man from the ape to a People's Commissar must necessarily pass through the phase of a Workers' Government [Laughter]. Such a variant in history is possible, and in the first place it is possible in a number of countries having a strong proletarian and peasant movement, or where the working class overwhelmingly outweigh the bourgeoisie, as is the case in England. A parliamentary labour victory in England is quite possible. It will not take place in the present elections, but it is possible in the future, and then the question will arise: What is the Labour Government? Is it no more than a new edition of the bourgeois-liberal government, or can we compel it to be something more? I believe Austen Chamberlain was right in saying, "If a Labour Government comes into power in England, it will begin with a Clynes administration and end in a government of the Left Wing, because the latter can solve the unemployed problem".

Thus, comrades, I believe the Executive on the whole has taken the right attitude in this question, when on the one hand it warns against the proposition of either Soviet government or nothing, and, on the other hand, against the illusion which makes the Workers' Government a sort of parachute.



# **Dombosky**

## **[Polish CP]**

### **Speech against the workers' government slogan**

I must cut short my remarks and come directly to the question of partial demands and workers' government, which has been the subject of discussion here. As regards the workers' government, I was in the same boat as my friend Duret, I could not understand the meaning of the workers' government in our tactic. At last I have heard a clear definition of this government. Comrade Radek has solaced me in private conversation that such a government is not contemplated for Poland (Radek: I never said it) Oh, then Poland will also have to bear the punishment of this sort of government. It is thus an international problem. Comrade Radek says that the workers' government is not a necessity but a possibility and it were folly to reject such possibilities. The question is whether we inscribe such possibilities on our banner, we try to accelerate the realisation of these policies once we have them on our banner. I believe it is quite possible that at the eleventh hour a so-called workers' government should come which is not the proletarian dictatorship. But I believe when such a government comes, it will be the resultant of various forces such as: our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, the struggle of the social-democrats against it and so forth. Is it proper to build our plans on such an assumption? I think not because I believe we should insist on our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship. If the workers' government is to come, it will come even if we agitate and fight for our full programme. It may happen that the working masses would turn their back on the national labour party and join the social-democrats, as has been the case in Upper Silesia. It would be a step forward, at all events. But it is not

our duty to agitate for such a step. We must agitate for our own Communist Party.

But some comrades give a different interpretation to the slogan of workers' government. We are really out for the Proletarian Dictatorship, but we dare not say it. The working masses are afraid of the Communist Dictatorship, and even when we declare that the Proletarian Dictatorship is not the Communist Dictatorship, they do not believe us.

I therefore think that when we meet with opposition to the Communist Dictatorship on the part of opponents whom this "Commis-sar" dictatorship paints in the blackest colours, it should be our position to counter-act such a position, not by launching slogans that are pseudonyms, as comrade Zinoviev aptly remarked. Pseudonyms will not win the fight for us. We must state our revolutionary demands quite clearly. This does not mean to say that we ought not to make any partial demands. We should draw up partial demands and we have done so in every struggle in as much as these were necessary for the struggle of the working masses for the improvement of their lot, and for them to weaken the chains of bondage. These slogans we ought to formulate and to support. But we should not advance any slogans in which we do not believe ourselves, we should have no slogans intended to expose anybody or as a means for manoeuvring. We must have slogans either partial or ultimate in which we believe ourselves, and for which we are ready to fight.

In conclusion, I would like to say this: the working class is not so foolish and not so cowardly as some are inclined to think. The working class wants to fight for the revolution. He who speaks to the workers in their own language for any length of time is bound to be understood. It is sheer ignorance of the situation of the working struggle to suppose that the workers can be ordered about like an army, now to the right, then to the left, without their own intelligent comprehension. This war can end in victory only when our slogans are perfectly clear and understood by every soldier. Only in this manner can the working class carry on the struggle consistently towards the ultimate goal.

## **Zinoviev: Speech on the tactics of the CI**

Comrades, you will allow me to discuss in detail the question of Workers' government. It is not yet quite clear to me whether there are serious differences of opinion with regard to this question, whether this question has been completely ventilated, or whether a good deal of our differences were caused by variations in terminology. In the course of the Congress, and during the working out of the resolution on tactical questions, with which we shall deal after the question of the Russian Revolution, this will become clear. As far as I am concerned the question has nothing to do with the word "pseudonym" which has been quoted here. I am quite willing, under these circumstances to give up the word. But the main thing is the significance. I think, comrades, that the question will be made clear if I express myself as follows: It is clear to us that every bourgeois government is a capitalist government. It is hard to imagine a bourgeois government — the rule of the bourgeois class — which is not at the same time a capitalist government. But I fear that one cannot reverse that saying. Every workers' government is not a proletarian government; not every workers' government is a socialist government.

This contrast is radical. It reveals the fact that the bourgeoisie have their outposts within our class, but that workers have not their outposts within the capitalist class. It is impossible for us to have our outposts in the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Every bourgeois Government is a capitalist government, and even many Workers' governments can be bourgeois governments according to their social content. I believe that one can imagine four kinds of Workers' Governments and even then we will not have exhausted the possibilities. You can have a Workers' government which, according to its composition, would be a Liberal Workers' Government, for example, the Australian Labour Government; and several of our Australian comrades say that the term

Workers' Government is incorrect because in Australia we have had such Workers' Governments of a bourgeois nature. These were really Workers' Governments, but their composition was of a purely Liberal character. They were bourgeois Workers' Governments, if one may so term them. Let us take this example: the general elections are taking place in England. It is not probable, but one may well accept in theory, as a possibility, that a Workers' Government will be elected, which will be similar to the Australian Labour Government and will be of Liberal composition. This Liberal Workers' Government in England can, under certain circumstances, constitute the starting point of revolutionising the situation. That could well happen. But by itself, it is nothing more than a Liberal Workers' Government. We, the Communists, now vote in England for the Labour Party. That is the same as voting for a Liberal Workers' Government. The English Communists are compelled by the existing situation to vote for a Liberal Workers' Government. These are absolutely the right tactics. Why? Because this objective would be a step forward; because a Liberal government in Britain would disturb the equilibrium, and would extend the bankruptcy of capitalism. We have seen in Russia during the Kerensky regime how the position of capitalism was smashed, despite the fact that the Liberals were the agents of capitalism. Plekhanov, in the period from February to October 1917, called the Mensheviks semi-Bolsheviks. We said that this was an exaggeration; they are not semi-Bolsheviks, but just quarter-Bolsheviks. We said this because we were at war with them, and because we saw their treachery to the proletariat. Objectively, Plekhanov was right. Objectively, the Menshevik government was best adapted to make a hash of capitalism, by making its position impossible. Our party, which was then fighting the Mensheviks, would not and could not see this. The parties stood arrayed for conflict. Under such conditions, we can only see that they are traitors to the working class. They are not opponents of the bourgeoisie, but when, for a period, they hold the weapons of the bourgeoisie in their hands, they make certain steps which are objectively against the bourgeois state. Therefore, in England, we support the

Liberal Workers Government and the Labour Party. The english bourgeoisie are right when they say that the workers' government will start with Clynes and end in the hands of the left wing.

That is the first type of a possible Workers' Government.

The second type is that of a Socialist Government. One can imagine that the United Social Democratic Party in Germany forms a purely socialist government. That would also be a Workers' Government, a Socialist Government — with the word — Socialist — of course in inverted commas. One can easily imagine a situation where we would give such a government certain conditional credit, a certain conditional support. One can imagine a Socialist government as being a first step in the revolutionising of the situation.

A third type is the so-called coalition government; that is, a government in which Social Democrats, Trade Union leaders and even perhaps Communists take part. One can imagine such a possibility. Such a government is not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is perhaps a starting point for the dictatorship. When all goes right, we can kick one social-democrat after another out of the government until the power is in the hands of the Communists. This is a historical possibility.

Fourthly, we have a workers' government which is really workers' government — that is a Communist Workers' Government, which is the true Workers' Government. I believe that this fourth possibility is a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is truly a Workers' government in the true sense of the word. But this by no means exhausts the question. There can be a fifth or a sixth type, and they can be excellent starting points for the revolutionising of the situation.

I fear that in seeking for a strictly scientific definition, we overlook the political significance of the term. I do not care for hair-splitting about a scientific definition, but I am concerned about not confusing the revolutionary definition. One has the feeling that before that — If we join the Social Democrats, if we join the Social-Democrats, we shall have a Workers' Government. They forget that having joined we must then overthrow the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie will not give up their power voluntarily; they

will resist with all their might. The question is to consider all eventualities within the perspective of world revolution and civil war. One should never forget that, outside the Labour parties, there stands a bourgeoisie which for hundreds of years has been in power and which will exert every effort to retain this power.

Therefore, in order to construct a workers' Government in the revolutionary sense, one must overthrow the bourgeoisie; and that is and that is the most important. We must not forget that we have here to distinguish between two things: [1] Our methods of agitation; how we can best speak to the simple workers, how we can enable them best to understand the position. For that purpose, I believe the slogan of the "Workers' Government is best adapted. [2] How will events develop historically, in what concrete forms will the revolution manifest itself? And all rambling discussions over slogans are worth nothing. We will now slightly raise the curtain of history.

How will the revolution proceed? We will attempt all ways: through the workers' government, through a coalition government and through a civil war. But all prophecies are out of place here. The revolution will probably come quite differently from the way we imagine it. We have already seen this in the Russian Revolution. Five years ago it was believed that the blockade, the famine etc. would force us to surrender. We foresaw all sorts of eventualities, except the eventuality of the new economic policy, except the victory of the revolution. The situation varies in each country. The revolution will probably come quite differently in Germany and England. This does not mean that, as conscious revolutionaries, we should not try to peep behind the curtain. We are thinking beings, the leaders of the working class. We must look at the question from all sides. It is nevertheless difficult to make any prediction. If we now look at the slogan of the workers' government from this new standpoint, as a concrete road to the realisation of the proletarian revolution, we may doubt whether the world revolution must necessarily pass through the stage of the workers' government. Our friend Radek said yesterday that the workers' government is a possible intermediate step to the dictatorship of the proletariat. I agree, it is a

possibility, or more exactly, an exceptional possibility. This does not mean that the slogan of the workers' government is not good. It is a good instrument of agitation where the relation of forces makes it possible. But if we put this question: Is the workers' government a necessary step towards the revolution? I must answer that this is not a question that we can solve here. It is a way, but the least probable of all. In countries with a highly developed bourgeois class, the proletariat can conquer power by force alone, through civil war. In such a case an intermediary step is not to be thought of. It might take place, but it is useless to argue about it. All that is necessary is that we see clearly all the possible ways towards the revolution. The workers' government may be nothing more than a liberal labour government, as it might be in England and Australia. Such a workers' government can also be useful to the working class. The agitation for a workers' government is wise, we may gain advantages therefrom. But in no case must we forget our revolutionary prospects. I have here a beautiful article by the Czechoslovak minister Benisek. I will read you a passage.

The "Tachas", organ of minister Benisek, writes, on September 18: "The Communist Party is building the United Front of the workers on a slogan of a fight against unemployment."

"We cannot deny that the communists are clever. They know how to present to the workers the same thing under different forms. For instance, some time ago, the communists began a campaign for the formation of Soviets. When they saw that this campaign was unsuccessful, they stopped their agitation, but resumed it a year and a half later under the mask of United Front committees. The United Front of the proletariat might become a tremendous force if based on progressive ideas, but the ideas of Moscow are not progressive."

This bourgeois is right, I believe. We communists who deal with the masses intellectually enslaved by the bourgeoisie, must make all efforts to enlighten our class. I have said that a workers' government might in reality be a bourgeois government; but they might appear a workers' government with real revolutionary tendencies. It is our duty to enlighten in all ways the more

receptive sections of the working class. But the contents of our declaration must always remain the same.

Another thing, comrades, Soviet Government does not always mean dictatorship of the proletariat. Far from it. A soviet government existed for eight months in Russia parallel with the Kerensky government, but this was not the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, we defended the slogan of the Soviet Government; and we only gave it up for a very short time.

This is why I believe that we can adopt the policy of the workers' government with a peaceful heart, under the only condition that we do not forget what it really amounts to. Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them ruthlessly; we must educate the working class by way of telling them: Yes, dear friends, to establish a workers' government, the bourgeoisie must first be overthrown and defeated.

This is the most important part of the slogan. We will say to the workers: Do you want a workers' government, if so, well and good, we are ready to come to an agreement even with the social-democrats, though we warn you that they are going to betray you; we favour a workers' government; but under the one condition that you be ready to fight with us against the bourgeoisie. If this is your wish, then we will take up the fight against the bourgeoisie; and if the workers' government results from the struggle, it will stand on sound principles, and will be a real beginning to the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no question here of the word pseudonym; I leave that word to Comrade Meyer; but we must draw a sharp line in this question. It is in no way a strategic move likely to replace civil war. The international must adopt the right tactics, but there are no tactics by means of which we could outwit the bourgeoisie and glide smoothly into the realm of a workers' government. The important thing is that we overthrow the bourgeoisie, after which various forms of the workers' government may be established.

In England in the given situation, a gov-

ernment may have objectively revolutionary effects, and therefore we will support it even if it be of a limited, menshevik-liberal nature. But in doing so we by no means avoid civil war. As a matter of fact it would be civil war only in another form which may become even more cruel than any other. The existence of such a workers' government does not mean the avoidance of civil war. We know that just such a menshevik-liberal government may oppose us more cruelly than a bourgeois government; Noske and our own mensheviks have given sufficient proof of this. This is why I say that this slogan may be a good means of agitation when we understand well its revolutionary possibilities: for instance, take the slogan of a Blum-Frossard government in France. The Executive is responsible for this. We had proposed this slogan in the course of our discussions. But it was premature in France. Why? Because, on account of the traditions of the Party, the slogan was understood as a pure parliamentary combination. The Executive was theoretically right when it said that the slogan of the workers' government must not be rejected. It was a possibility. It contained revolutionary prospects, but in France, under the circumstances, it was premature. If we had based our united action on the eight-hour day, we might have had better results. As it was, some comrades at once grew suspicious, and rumours were soon set afloat of the unification of the parties, etc. We must take the facts as they are. Some of our friends of the Left have perhaps been guilty of exaggeration. If I am not mistaken, it was comrade Souvarine who said that there was a time in Russia when a Lenin-Martov government was contemplated. That is not true. Such possibility never came up in Russia. We must not forget that with the fall of Czarism, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie was also half accomplished. The February Revolution, indeed, was a bourgeois revolution; but it was not wholly bourgeois, it was already then a great popular revolution which contained the seed of the October Revolution. Soldiers' Soviets had been organised from the very first day; soviets which were not to be disbanded after a few months as Noske had done in Germany, but such as began the fight against Kerensky from the very beginning.

At such a time when the mensheviks formed a kind of secondary government, the

slogan of a workers' government was in place. As we know this led to no positive results. The civil war was not avoided. We did not form an alliance with Martov, but with the Left wing Social Revolutionaries who represented the revolutionary peasantry. In this sense, the slogan was justified. But to attempt the same thing in France, and to say that this was the same as a Martov-Lenin government, was a wrong appreciation of the situation.

Even our best comrades have made mistakes in the application of this policy. I do not believe that this Congress, after the work of the commissions has been accomplished, will reject the slogan of the workers' government. This slogan is indisputably correct as a means to approach the masses. It is only a question of knowing how to apply it. It contains the same dangers as the United Front. When one speaks of government, one naturally thinks of Parliamentary combinations, with a distribution of cabinet seats, etc. We shall meet even greater difficulties here than in the application of the United Front. But this is no reason why we should reject it, as our French comrades have proposed.

## Radek: speech on the capitalist offensive.

★As with other speeches, we reproduce only the part of the speech on the Workers' Gov't question — omitting also, in this case, a few short passages from that part.

Agreed, that the starting points of our activities must be the demand for higher wages, the demand for retention of the eight-hour day and the demand for the development of the industrial council movement. But these demands do not suffice. Workers who belong to no political party at all can and do demand the daily wage of one thousand marks, whilst five hundred marks will not procure them the necessaries of life. But they see that to increase their wages in paper money provides no issue from their troubles. To begin with, such watchwords may suffice; but the longer the struggle lasts, the more

essential does it become to proclaim political watchwords, the watchwords of social organisation. When the time is ripe for the voicing of such demands, it is time to move from the defensive to the offensive. We must put forward in these circumstances the demand for control of production and make clear to the workers that this is the only way out of economic chaos.

Now I come to a question which plays a great part in our resistance to the capitalist offensive. I refer to the question of the Labour Government. The important point for us in this connection is, rather than classification, to propound the question: What are the masses of the workers, not merely the Communists, thinking of when they speak of Labour Governments? I confine myself to countries in which these ideas have already found an echo: Britain, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In England, think of the Labour Party. Communism there is not yet a mass power. In the countries where capitalism is decaying, this idea is intimately associated with that of the United Front. Just as the workers say that the meaning of the United Front is that the Communists and Social-Democrats must make common cause in the factory when there is a strike, so for the masses of the workers the idea of a Labour Government has a similar significance. The workers are thinking of a government of all the working class parties. What does that mean for the masses practically and politically? The political decision of the question will depend on the fact whether the social-democracy does or does not go with the bourgeoisie. Should it do so, then the Labour Government can only take the form of the dictatorship of the Communist proletariat. We cannot decide for the social democrats what their policy should be. What we have to decide is this. When we lead the masses in the struggle against the capitalist offensive, are we ready to fight on behalf of such a labour coalition government? Are we or are we not ready to bring about the conditions essential to its realisation?

That is a question which for the masses would only be confused by theoretical calculations. In my opinion, when we are concerned with the struggle for the United Front, we ought to say bluntly that, if the social-democratic workers will force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie, then we are ready to participate in a labour

government, so long as that government is an instrument of the class struggle. I mean, if it is ready to fight beside us shoulder to shoulder.

Let us suppose that ripe plums were to fall into our mouths. There has been no serious alteration in the position of affairs in Germany. Stinnes has the coal; von Seeckt has the soldiers; Scheidemann has only the Wilhelmstrasse. We, too, are invited to the Wilhelmstrasse. If comrade Meyer will only be good enough to wear a frock coat [laughter] and will take comrade Ruth Fischer by the arm and, in spite of her struggles [laughter], lead here with him into the Chancellor's palace. Suppose that such fancies were to become actualities, what would be the effective difficulties in the way of the realisation of the plan? General Seeckt would come along and would throw comrade Meyer and Scheidemann and comrade Ruth Fischer into the street, and that would be the end of the Labour Government.

When we are thinking of the struggle against the capitalist offensive, what we have in mind is not a parliamentary combination, but a platform for the mobilisation of the masses, an arena for the struggle. The form the question takes is this. Will the social-democrats be excluded from the coalition by the bourgeoisie; will they continue to rot in the coalition; or shall we help the masses to compel them to fight? Perhaps you will ask why the deuce we should bother what they do? If it only concerned the fate of the leaders of the social-democrats, we should certainly be quite happy to leave them to rot. But when the question at issue is the mobilisation of the social-democratic masses, we must formulate a positive programme.

To what extent does such a programme conflict with the dictatorship of the proletariat? To what extent does it conflict with the civil war? It conflicts to the same extent to which an ante-room conflicts with the room to which it leads [hear! hear!]. Even if the bourgeoisie should anywhere leave the government in the hands of the social-democracy and the communists [a historical possibility, as the Hungarian example shows], there will follow a period of fierce struggles. But a situation might arise resembling that in which the bourgeoisie found itself on November 9th in Germany — when the bourgeoisie simply vanished.



The bourgeoisie might find itself in a position in which it would leave power in the hands of the social-democrats and the Communists in the hope that we should not be able to retain power. Whether we secure it through renunciation on the part of the bourgeoisie, civil war will be the outcome of a Labour Government. The working class will not be able to retain power without civil war.

It is not as if we Communists were to say: "We simply cannot get on without a civil war" — in the same spirit in which Tom Sawyer felt it necessary to free the nigger through a subterranean passage made for the purpose, although the door of the cell was not locked. It is not that we say to ourselves: "I won't accept power except through the civil war; I shan't be happy until I have a civil war" [laughter]. The simple point is, comrade Zinoviev said, that the bourgeoisie can renounce in this case or that, but will not definitely abandon power without fighting.

If the social-democrats are incompetent to fight, then we shall simply march over them. Where the Labour Government comes into existence, it will merely be a stepping stone to the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the bourgeoisie will not tolerate a Labour Government even though founded on democratic principles. The social-democratic worker will find himself forced to become a Communist, will find himself compelled to engage in civil war, in order to defend his rule. For this reason I believe that, in practice, as things will actually develop, there is little danger of stagnation — in so far, at least, as we are concerned with the realities of the class struggle, and not with the problems of the parliamentary government in remote nooks of the west like Brunswick and Thuringia, where we can perhaps sit in the seats of power without civil war.

As far as we are concerned with the broad front of the proletarian struggle for freedom, the watchword of the labour government is necessary to supply us with a directive; it is a watchword that whets the edge of our political weapons. The moment when the workers find themselves simultaneously engaged in the fight for the labour government and in the fight for control of production, will be the moment when our fundamental offensive will begin, the moment when we shall cease

to content ourselves with trying to defend what we have, and shall advance to the attack on new positions! Our offensive will begin as soon as the workers are ready to fight for these two watchwords.

The Communists cannot artificially foster this offensive. The great defect of the March Action lay in the attempt to substitute for the fighting energy of the masses the readiness of our own party to fight. The readiness of our party for the fight must show itself in the agitation and organisation of the masses. It is extremely significant of the present position of the labour movement that, even in the countries where we have the best developed parties, our agitation still exhibits an abstract character, that it is not yet instinct with the passion of persons convinced they are fighting for aims realisable in the near future. All their work produces the impression of pure agitation. If we desire that our debates shall not die of anaemia, and that our congresses shall not resemble party conventicles in which nothing but theoretical evolutionary tendencies are discussed, the parties must pursue in practice a very different policy from that they have pursued in the past. There must be a change, not merely in political aim, but also in the energy of the struggle.

The Communist International is not merely the party for the conquest of power, it is the party for conducting the fight. It is nonsense, therefore, to say: "These are piping times of peace so the party cannot fight". Such a view would make of the Communist International a parasite upon the proletarian world revolution instead of a combatant on its behalf. The watchword must be, not one of disillusionment and of waiting for the revolution, but one of fighting for every inch of ground. All our discussions are devoid of meaning unless we understand that we can only form Communist Parties upon condition that their main activity is not to be in the rooms where resolutions are passed and studied, but on the battlefield where our aims find practical fulfillment, in the united front of the proletariat, in the fight along the lines that are made actual by contemporary history.



## **Radek: summing up speech on the capitalist offensive.**

.... He [Urbahns] said that our greatest illusion was that the Social Democrats will fight, that their leaders who have acted since 1914 as agents of the bourgeoisie are all of a sudden going to lead this struggle. Comrade Urbahns who has heard for years that they were agents of the bourgeoisie says naturally: How can agents of the bourgeoisie fight? Well, dear comrades, if politics were such an easy thing that after I have said once that they were agents of the bourgeoisie they would be forever damned, then politics would be very easy.

There is no doubt that as far as leaders of the Social Democracy are concerned, they are consciously against a revolution. But these leaders live in Germany, France and England, not in a vacuum, or just to polemicise with comrade Urbahns and myself. These leaders find support in Germany in a party with a million members and in the many millions who follow the party. These leaders are either openly for the bourgeoisie or attempt to break away from it, depending at conditions at any given time.

Let me recall to you a very simple incident. On the 5th of November 1918, Scheidemann and Ebert were negotiating with the general staff. They promised to save the Crown Prince and the Monarchy if the Kaiser should abdicate. Then on the 9th of November, Scheidemann jumped up on the tribune of the Reichstag and shouted Long live the Republic! Some say he did it the better to betray us later [Interruption: Quite true]. But since then a small thing has happened, which comrade Urbahns did not take at all into consideration, namely the overthrow of the Hohenzollerns, the revolution, and the counter-revolution. The Scheidemanns have betrayed us, but before that, they had helped us to overthrow

Wilhelm. The only one who denies this is he who does not want to see or hear anything which is disagreeable to him.

At the meeting of the enlarged Executive and in his speech on tactics, Zinoviev used a very happy phrase: "True, the social democrats are traitors to the proletariat, but they can also betray the bourgeoisie whenever this becomes necessary for their salvation. Now the second question is to what extent we can rely on this. Comrades, if curses could kill a party, we would ask comrade Zinoviev to sign an ukase ordering Scheidemann and company to disappear from the face of the earth. Since this is impossible, we must fight them. The only question is when we will be able to destroy them. It is possible that these people are so tightly bound to the bourgeoisie that they cannot break away from them, so that we will have to destroy them together with the bourgeoisie. But it is also possible that there will come a time when, the coalition with the bourgeoisie having become impossible for them, they will be forced to enter into a coalition with us. In this coalition they will attempt to betray us. We will be able to conquer them only after their actions within the coalition will have discredited them totally, and the masses will have gone over to us. He who does not take into account all these possibilities, who is ever repeating, he loves me, he loves me not, will he betray me wholly or only partly, shall I be afraid or shall I not be afraid, reminds me of the girls of whom Heine says that they have nothing else but their virtue. Well, comrade Urbahns, you have even lost that for you are not against the workers' government on principle; such a depreciated virtue has very little weight in a question of principles.

What does the slogan of the workers' government signify? Comrade Urbahns has hinted at the great differences which exist between Trotsky, Zinoviev and myself on this question. Many times already we have read in the bourgeois press of Europe of how the cavalry of Bukharin is fighting with the infantry of Zinoviev, how one day Trotsky arrested Lenin and on the other day Lenin arrested Trotsky. But to try to make secrets out of this is not necessary. We are not machines. Our thoughts are not all alike. One person approaches a question from one point of view, the other from another. One looks at things from the point of view of one

country, the other from another, which results in different shades of meaning.

The question is whether the Executive favours action among the masses for a workers' government or not? The second question is, what does the workers' government signify? At the present moment in Germany this means that we will declare to the Social Democrats that we are ready to fight with them against the bourgeois coalition, that we will support a workers' government, or even take part in it. Is this the standpoint of the Executive or not? I say it is and this is what matters politically. Comrade Urbahns said that as far as the workers' government is concerned he considers it impossible. Therefore, if the bourgeois coalition fails, comrade Urbahns will follow this method of agitation — he will come to the social democratic dock workers in Hamburg and tell them: you are seven times as strong as we are, we put forth the demand for a workers' government and are going to fight for it, but it is impossible.

Of course, this is idiotic. Now I should like to say a few words here to comrade Smeral. His great mistake is that because of his opportunistic policy in the past, he believes that every time he rises to speak, he must cross himself and say, "Do not imagine that this is an opportunist standpoint". If you believe it let us argue it out. I agree with comrade Smeral that in Germany the struggle for the formation of a workers' government may begin shortly, perhaps even in the next few months. Then all at once comrade Smeral begins to swear at the Left and says: I do not believe in the workers' government, but others believe in it and therefore let us act as if we also believe in it. If this is the way to conduct a political campaign, then I know nothing of politics. To appear before the masses with such a programme at a time when the dollar is worth 10 thousand marks, when wages are being lowered, the coalition broken up because Stinnes is against a stabilisation of the mark, is absolute nonsense.

A compromise may be achieved, but in this crisis, in this incapability of the bourgeoisie to stabilise anything, in this chaos, I believe that the Communist Party points the road to salvation. It must say to the masses: you are afraid of the dictatorship of the proletariat and we are for the dictatorship. You

think that it can be achieved peacefully, try it. You can get the majority in Germany, go and win the proletarian majority. You will have to adopt dictatorship, and we will struggle with you. In such a situation our comrades who maintain that they are more closely connected with the masses than anyone else, will come forward and say: to the devil with the bourgeois coalition, let us have the workers' government, for we are in favour of it. The others say, "we do not think" but you think so! [Laughter]. Comrades, try and look pleasant, we are going to manoeuvre with you!

Is it possible to carry on such a campaign? Must we not tell the masses what we want, and what we intend to oppose to the capitalist attack? We must tell the masses that we wish to put against the capitalist attack, as a practical aim, the unity of the working class, which is politically disunited at present. If the party gets into power before the majority of the working class is ready to dare all, we shall be with it during all the stages of the struggle in the full conviction that the struggle will bring them over to our viewpoint.

... Comrades, I want to say a few words about the peril from the Right. The British delegate Webb spoke here and admonished the Executive to keep to the 21 conditions. I heard today for the first time that our good comrade Webb was robbed of his sleep for fear that there might be 20 conditions. I can reassure him. Comrade Zinoviev said that at the next negotiations with groups coming from the Right, there will be 42 conditions. Perhaps this will satisfy comrade Webb. However, the party which he represents is not as radical as he is. We are obliged to criticise a little the party which he represents in connection with a serious error of action. I have before me the election address of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

How does the British Communist Party apply its United Front tactics? It says: "We are a section of the working class, namely its Left Wing. Nevertheless, we want to stand together with all the other workers' parties". Whither Naomi goes thither goes Ruth also. I do not mean comrade Ruth Fischer [laughter], but the kindhearted biblical Ruth. And then the election address goes on: "What is the Labour Party? The workers are fine fellows, they want to fight,

but the leaders are not quite so fine". And then it says: "In the past as in the present there was treachery on the part of the leaders. Such treachery might happen once. But nevertheless, the Labour Party is against the capitalists". By Jove, if this is a sample of unity tactics, perhaps we better leave them alone. The Executive has shown in its manifesto that the entire policy of the Labour Party is nothing but a continuous betrayal of working class interests. But the Executive also said to the workers: If the Labour Party is victorious and forms a government, it will betray you in the end and will show to the workers that its aim is the perpetuation of capitalism. Then the workers will either desert it or the Labour Party will be compelled to fight owing to the pressure of the workers, and in that case we shall back it. We issued a definite watchword:

vote for it, but prepare to struggle against it. If thereupon comrade Webb comes here and warns us against the opportunists, we can only say to him: "Comrade Webb, book your berth as quickly as possible and return to England, in order to fight against opportunism there, and you will have our heartiest support".



"INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST" no. 5 will include a text of the Internationale Kommunistische Liga (Austria) critically assessing Zinoviev's position and discussing the debate on the workers' government slogan within the German Communist Party.

# Reviews

## Red, or Scottish?

Gordon Brown [ed]: "The Red Paper on Scotland". EUSPB, 1975. £1.60.

The current prominence of the devolution issue makes this book, published in 1975, once again topical.

Three of the 28 essays are worth reading. In eight pages John McEwen summarises an enormous amount of information about Highlands landlordism. "... 56 people own 3,044,000 acres — just under one third of the land. 0.1% of the population of the Highlands and Islands including Perthshire own 64% of the land". If one should think this is a matter of **Scottish** land being seized by **English** despots, it is suff-

icient to look at McEwen's list of the biggest landowners. Names like the Duke of Atholl, the Duke of Sutherland, and Sir D Cameron of Lochiel figure at the top of the list.

John Foster's paper on 'Capitalism and the Scottish nation' concludes, obligatorily, with the Stalinist party line: "it remains a paramount need for **all** workers in Britain to ensure that the Welsh and Scottish peoples secure control over their own economies: that the establishment of national parliaments becomes part of the overall struggle against monopoly capitalism". The preceding pages give, however, a succinct and informative outline of Scottish economic history from the period leading up to the Union of 1707.

Tom Nairn's essay, 'Old Nationalism and New Nationalism', displays, like Foster's, a dislocation between analysis and conclusions. He sketches a witty and scathing analysis of Scottish national culture: "This vast tartan monster... it is something else to be with it (e.g. in a London pub on International night, or in a crowd at the annual Military Tattoo in front of Edinburgh Castle). How intolerably vulgar! What unbearable, crass, mindless philistinism! One knows that **Kitsch** is a large constituent of mass popular culture in every land: but this is ridiculous!"

And then, when Nairn comes to justify his own nationalist political stance (he is at present in the Sillars SLP), the argument descends to blind prejudice. "The question is really not at all whether new nationalism has, or has not, a 'positive' side to it. No intellectual (!) from a repressed or destroyed nationality has doubts about this, if he is honest with himself. Return from oblivion, the reassertion of identity, adult control of one's own affairs — it does not matter what terminology is used, the value of national liberation is plain enough".

The logic of Nairn's position appears to reside in this identification of himself as an "intellectual". As such, he can and must deride the "mass popular culture" of the proletariat; but when it comes to practical politics, there is nothing for it but to go along with one or another variety of 'vulgarity'. A conscious, educated working-class vanguard is not a practical option.

The other essays of the book mostly combine a haphazard collection of information — none of it focused and structured with any clear critical intelligence — with reformist speculat-

ions. Many of the contributors feel obliged to wheel out awkward expositions of the Leninist concept of revolution, in order to reject it. For it is only by quelling the demon of proletarian revolution that Scottish nationalism can establish itself as a solution to the crisis of capitalism in Scotland.

M.T.

## HUNGARY 1956

"Hungary 1956", by Bill Lomax. Allison & Busby.

THE DEFEATED Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is to the struggle for direct workers' power in the degenerated and deformed workers' states where Stalinist parties rule, what the Paris Commune of 1871 was to the anti-capitalist revolution. Of the Commune Engels said: "*That was the dictatorship of the proletariat*" — and Marx and he set about analysing and learning from it. Hungary 1956 was what Trotskyists had been calling the anti-bureaucratic '*political*' revolution for two decades. It vindicated what Trotsky had outlined as the necessary programme for communist revolutionaries in the USSR, from 1935, and what some of the post-war Trotskyists had adapted and applied to the new Stalinist states: the programme for an anti-bureaucratic revolution to overthrow the mis-rule and the privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and to dismantle and destroy the totalitarian state machine which serves it.

There had been many revolts against bureaucratic rule in the USSR itself. In 1953 there were the strikes and uprisings in East Germany. In 1956 in Poland there was the Posnan uprising. None of these, however, had reached the stage of creating an alternative power structure. In Hungary, the combination of CP leadership struggles around destalinisation, an intense national sense of grievance against Russian overlordship, and direct action by the working class, led to a movement which did create an outline of an alternative political system of working-class self-rule.

In fact the Hungarian workers created a specifically *working class* system of workers' councils, and counterposed it to both capitalism and the Stalinist bureaucratic system. They were defeated and crushed by the Stalinist Russian army, as were the Paris workers by the army of Versailles. But in the Central

Workers' Council of Budapest they recreated the classic model of working class democracy, the lineal continuation of the Commune, of the Russian Soviets, and to an extent of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919.

Before Hungary, a writer like Isaac Deutscher could base himself on the social analysis which Trotsky made in the late 1930s of bureaucratised Russia, and counterpose that analysis to Trotsky's political conclusions after 1935. He argued that a political revolution was not *necessary*, and moreover that there was no rooted antagonism within Russian society, or within the other Stalinist states, that would produce a decisive confrontation between the bureaucratic caste and the working class.

There was no equivalent to the worker-bourgeois antagonism, and consequently there would be social progress, an easing of tensions and conflicts, and, ultimately, a reflex adjustment of the level of political democracy to the advancing level of technology. The bureaucracy did not come into fundamental conflict with the potential for growth of the economy, but could adjust — consequently there would be no political revolution.

The Hungarian Revolution refuted that view. It raised up in real life and, in defiance of Stalinist might, fought for an alternative working-class political system to bureaucratic rule. Replicating the Russian Soviets of 1917, it showed they had been no accident or aberration.

It demonstrated that the unevenness of developments in different Stalinist states made impossible any overall bureaucratic control except by military force, and created the possibility of explosive interactions, as between Poland & Hungary in 1956. It demonstrated that the bureaucracy could not tolerate independent initiatives; simultaneously it showed that the distance between the first criticism of the Stalinist bureaucratic system and demands for its end is extremely short, precisely because of the arbitrary and unnecessary 'function' of the bureaucracy.

Even within a phase of destalinisation, which many then took to be an evolutionary 'thawing' of the bureaucracy, it resorted to ruthless force, and felt obliged to smash and destroy every vestige of the independent working class organisations that had begun to grow in 1956. Hungary also showed that sections of the bureaucracy could quickly dissolve or even come over to the working class — though Poland, where a section of the bureaucratic leadership kept control, showed the dangers of working-class *reliance* on any bureaucrats.

No doubt the national oppression made Hungary exceptionally explosive — but when the explosion came, it resulted in specific *working class* types of organisation and weapons of struggle, such as the general strike. Conditions *specific* to Hungary and Poland created the conditions where the workers were no longer prepared to be ruled, and the local bureau-

crats were no longer able to rule (though the Russian bureaucrats were able and willing to rule); but the classic working-class character of the Hungarian Revolution is proof that its essence is not limited to states where national oppression is adjoined to bureaucratic rule.

Bill Lomax's chronicle of the activity of the Hungarian working class in 1956 establishes beyond argument the revolutionary working-class nature and significance of the Hungarian Revolution. He is especially clear in bringing out just *what* the counter-revolution carried out by the Russians and their local allies & stooges meant in *real* terms to the workers. He describes how the means of production were literally seized from the control of the working class. Also valuable is the description of the CP opposition groupings, crippled by party 'legalism'.

His conclusions (chapter 7) however, are weak. He defines the sum of the activity of the Kadar CP as 'substituting' its own 'power-political interests' for 'the direct class interests of the Hungarian workers'. The main fault of the oppositional 'Communists' was that they were a half-way house between these two. Rakosi before 1956 and Kadar after it were 'substitutionist'. This in turn flowed from 'loyalty to Leninist conceptions of the revolutionary party and its relationship with the masses', in which 'can be seen the continuity between the orthodox Marxist-Leninist idea of the Stalinist party leadership and the revisionist beliefs of Imre Nagy and the reformist opposition, a continuity which was only challenged and eventually broken by the Revolution itself' (p. 197). These ideas originated in 'What is to be done?' and 'the development of the totalitarian party-state was carried even further by Lenin's successor, Stalin, under whose rule the party was turned into a mere instrument of the Stalinist state power'.

But Lomax himself brings out clearly the fatal role of the vacillating and unsure policy of those who found themselves reluctant leaders of a revolution. It surely follows that a different type of leadership might have made the difference between the defeat which occurred and the victory which was possible. Certainly the revolt could have been spread to Poland and perhaps beyond. A revolutionary organisation which had a clear programme and trained cadres involved with the masses might very well have changed the course of events. Such a conclusion flows logically and inescapably from the picture Lomax himself paints of what was wrong, what was missing.

But Lomax believes that any such party would necessarily be 'substitutionist'. Indeed he says that the mode of operation and the goal of all political parties are necessarily in conflict with the self-liberation of the working class, which exercises its self-rule directly through its control of the factories. It has as little need to 'take power' once it has control of the factories as it had need in Russia in October 1917 to appoint

a 'People's Tsar'.

Conceptions like 'taking power' relate to an entirely different system. Control is power; power other than self-control develops towards self-substitution for the working class's direct control.

It is not at all clear how the different factories which are controlled by the workers would interact. Through a form of market? Or if there is to be planning, how is it to be organised?

This reaction against the Stalinist experience leads to a denial of any positive role to any revolutionary party.

Lomax seems to believe that the Hungarian councils system is historically unique. He does not refer to the Russian or other experiences. He substitutes fairy tales about Bolshevik substitutionism for any implicit or explicit reference to the experience of how the Bolshevik party interacted with the spontaneous activity of the Russian working class in 1917. The identification of the Stalinist state machine and its purged, broken, and careerist-ridden 'party' with Lenin's ideas in 'What is to be done?' is simply nonsense on the factual level.

The Stalinist state grew out of the isolation of the Russian Revolution and backward material conditions in Russia. If the highly centralised party became a factor in the growth of totalitarianism, it was only after it was swamped by careerists (1924) and then purged until there was little left even of the original membership.

In 1905-7 and 1917, Lenin's ideas led the Bolsheviks, not to substitute themselves for the working class, but to be the most clear-headed elements *within* the organs of self-control and action which the working class set up. Had they not existed, and had they not led in stabilising the gains of the working class by setting up a workers' state, then a counter-revolutionary state would have been set up. The experience of Spain, where in the Republican areas, from July 1936 to mid-1937, the workers had real control, even though workers' councils did not emerge, proves that. The political vacuum was filled by elements hostile to workers' control. The anarchists who did not believe any state power was compatible with liberation wound up accepting the need for some state, of the impossibility of a vacuum if fascism was not be allowed to create *its* own state — and opted for the counter-revolutionary Popular Front. The gains of the working class in the Republican areas were liquidated.

Things can only be otherwise *if* there are no enemies of working class revolution, internal or external, and *if* conditions in society are such that no state power is necessary. Lomax ends with a quotation from Saint-Simon: 'The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things'. But this relates necessarily to the fully communist society — more advanced materially than even the most advanced societies today. Between capitalism and commun-

ism there is a transition, which Marxists understand as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Certainly this is a 'semi-state', differing centrally from all other states in being rule of the majority over a minority, and therefore direct rule, needing no bureaucracy. But equally certainly such a transitional stage is essential and unavoidable. It is rooted in the material conditions of capitalist society — conditions that can only be changed *after* the revolution.

The attempt by revolutionaries to avoid it will produce conditions where the 'state' vacuum is filled by anti-working class forces. Either that or revolutionaries will never dare *act* until all conditions are propitious and until an *immediate* transition to a situation where only things are administered is possible. With this paralysing purism, only *simultaneous* revolution, in at least the most advanced countries, would allow what Lomax envisages to be the *first* step.

Indeed, sadly lacking in the book is any sense of internationalism, either in terms of the international perspectives for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, or even in the account of the October Revolution and its degeneration. Everything is simply read off from the organisational conception which Lomax attributes to Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and he ignores the international revolutionary perspectives of the Bolsheviks, the failure of which was the precondition of the Stalinist degeneration.

In fact Lomax is not *fundamentally* very far from the position of Isaac Deutscher — who was rigorous in his reasoning. Subjectively he wants to be — but that is not the same thing. He shares with Deutscher the notion of the historic lawfulness of the bureaucracy. He blandly itemises the Stalinist bureaucracy and the state as a *new* ruling class; but he must pay for the satisfaction of describing the marauding bureaucracy as a ruling class by saying — inescapably — that 'Stalinist society' is a new type of class society for which there is as yet no Marxist analysis. From such a point of view it is not at all clear that the Hungarian outbreak was not just an accidental episode. It would be necessary to establish by argument that the new Stalinist societies were either historic aberrations or confined to certain backward countries, not the alternative to capitalism on a world scale, *before* it would be possible to talk, in a Marxist sense, of the possibility and necessity of proletarian revolution. One can of course — as Lomax does — simply *declare* for the working class against the bureaucracy. But then at best you are back in *pre-scientific* socialism, before 1847.

The conclusions of anarcho-syndicalism are as futile for revolutionary politics now (even when presented as 'conclusions' from the experience of Stalinism — as they were in the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. But at least they allow Lomax to depict vividly the tremendous revolutionary capacity developed by the Hungarian commune of 1956.

S.M.

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